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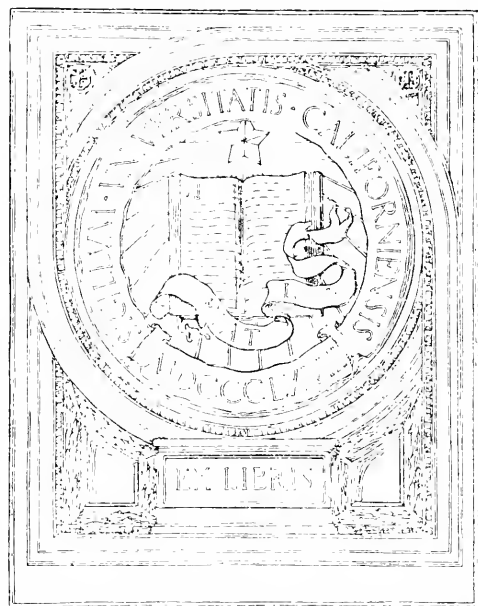


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Introduction to the Study
of Australian
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by Zora Cross

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT LOS ANGELES



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An Introduction to the Study of Australian Literature

By ZORA CROSS

Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

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Teachers' College Press
and
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TO
THE TEACHERS BESIDE
WHOM I HAVE WORKED

ACKNOWLEDGMENT.

My thanks are due to all those who have rendered me assistance and encouragement in the preparation of these lectures, including the late Bertram Stevens, Angus and Robertson, Ltd., "The Bulletin," The Mitchell Library, and the authors themselves.

Z.C.

P R E F A C E.

These papers are the substance of a course of lectures delivered at the Teachers' College, 1920-1921, and are issued for teachers in the hope that they may prompt the beginnings of an appreciation of their own literature in the minds of Australian children. They do not propose to give any more than a hint of the rich field open for study.

Z. C.

KENDALL

Let us go down among the moss that clings
To the still stones by brooklets crystal-clear.
There is a spirit who long year by year
Wanders in leafy solitude and sings
To his green mates, the trees, rememberings
Of the sweet hours they knew in days more dear
When boyish fancies fashioned from a tear
Lyrics as tender as a blossom's wings.

We shall make friends with sunlit words run wild
That turn a lover-lilt in ecstasy,
And bow our heads as the boy falls asleep
Forlorn and fatherless—a lonely child.
On the bare rocks above we start to see
The tragic man himself look down and weep.

HENRY CLARENCE KENDALL.

I HAVE chosen Henry Kendall for the main subject of this lecture, not because I think he has left any greater mark upon our literature than either Charles Harpur or Adam Lindsay Gordon, but because, in my opinion, he has left in letters for all generations to possess the remarkable revelation of a man's soul.

That, you will say, is surely what, in a measure, all poets have done. Not so. That is what they may have endeavoured to do; but few men have so piteously and agonisingly suffered for us in song as this Australian-born singer of our own gullies and bell-birds and wild mountain streams. The salt of his own heart-tears still stains the pages of our literature, albeit he has been dead for many years. It is for this reason, then, I have chosen him from among the noble little band of singers in the days when what literature we have was in its brave and tuneful making.

I might have taken Charles Harpur, a more careful workman than Kendall, a man who laid the foundations of Australian song both deeply and strongly. In many ways Harpur is a finer poet than Kendall. In his best poem, "The Creek of the Four Graves," he has used a strong, full blank verse. The pictures crowd upon one another in quick and radiant succession.

This is a descriptive passage which folds about itself the draperies of the grave, grand and awful beauty of our bush:

Eastward at last
The glow was wasted into formless gloom.
Night's front; then westward the high, massing woods
Steeped in a swart but mellow Indian hue.
A deep dusk loveliness, lay ridged and heaped,
Only the more distinctly for their shade,
Against the twilight heaven—a cloudless depth.
Yet luminous with sunset's fading glow;
And thus awhile in the lit dusk they seemed
To hang like mighty pictures of themselves
In the still chambers of some vaster world.

There is passion in the love sonnets of this singer; fire in his

thought, and his homeric translations gleam and flash with many a fine phrase.

If I had been looking for the most important voice of the earlier days, I should most certainly have chosen Harpur, who was born at Windsor, N.S.W., two years after the battle of Waterloo, and died at 51, farming at Eurodollaha, also in N.S.W.

But I have been moved to talk of Kendall because his personal appeal is stronger to me. It is an appeal which goes even deeper than that of Adam Lindsay Gordon, the reckless rider of a more daring Pegasus, who arrived in Australia at the age of 20 and broke in horses before he galloped them into rhyme. Though he was born in the Azores, claimed kinship with Byron, was descended from a Scottish family, and went to Cheltenham College, Woolwich Military Academy, and Merton College, Oxford, and did not reach Australia until the year before the Crimean War, Gordon's truest poetry is that which deals with Australia. His flight of song may be only hurdle-high, but he glorified the trite and commonplace in a way that gained for him a unique popularity with common-place readers: and this esteem was intensified by his tragic death at Brighton, where he took his own unhappy life at the age of 37. He had come to Australia in 1853, just at the time when Henry Kingsley was gathering material for his subsequent Australian novel, "Geoffrey Hamlyn." In the dark year that the poet took his own life (1870), Alfred Domett, an Englishman, who had been writing good verse in New Zealand, returned home, and Ada Cambridge arrived in Melbourne.

Gordon was never in any sense an Australian, but he has left us Australian pictures in "The Sick Stockrider," which have a pulse in them:—

'Twas merry 'mid the blackwoods, when we spied the station roofs.

To wheel the wild scrub cattle at the yard.

With a running fire of stock whips and a fiery run of hoofs:

Oh! the hardest day was never then too hard!

The last four verses hold in them the parting of the eternal ways on a hot summer's day in Australia.

I've had my share of pastime, and I've done my share of toil.

And life is short—the longest life a span:

I care not now to tarry for the corn or for the oil.

Or for wine that maketh glad the heart of man:

For good undone, and gifts misspent, and resolutions vain.

'Tis somewhat late to trouble. This I know—

I should live the same life over, if I had to live again:

And the chances are I go where most men go.

The deep blue skies wax dusky, and the tall green trees grow dim.

The sward beneath me seems to heave and fall:

And sickly, smoky shadows through the sleepy sunlight swim.

And on the very sun's face weave their pall.

Let me slumber in the hollow where the wattle blossoms wave,

With never stone or rail to fence my bed:

Should the sturdy station children pull the bush-flowers on my grave.

I may chance to hear them romping overhead.

But Gordon, with all his manly philosophy of life, had neither Kendall's facilities as a verse-maker, nor Kendall's ear for the euphonious phrase, the singing syllable.

Why Australians should look upon Henry Kendall as their first native-born poet, considering that Charles Harpur sang before him, I do not know. A tradition has grown up about Kendall, which is hardly fair to Harpur, seeing that Kendall himself admits his indebtedness to the older man.

I do not propose to give you many details of Kendall's life. For a concise account of that you should read Bertram Stevens' preface to his "Collected Poems," issued in 1920 in Sydney. His life began sadly when, in a little hut which his father had built with his own hands in the green peace of the bush he was always to love, Kendall and his twin brother were born in 1841. His father died when Henry was 10 years old, and the wanderings of this super-sensitive lad began. The first was a happy journey to an uncle on the South Coast; but two hard years at sea followed, and after that, lesser wanderings in Sydney. At sixteen, he was hard at work. Not a very congenial beginning for a poet, you may think, and justly. Where had he received his education? That is a question which his work alone can answer. Of true scholarship he had very little; but, by the persistence of his own struggle, he was able to take a civil servant's position at twenty-one. His father had been exceptionally well educated, and his mother was a clever woman who always encouraged his verse-making. From these two he had his early education. Afterwards, Life itself taught him more than all the books he read. Perhaps he owed something to Sir Henry Parkes, who, as Editor of the *Empire*, had accepted some of Kendall's first verses. I can find nothing striking in these. There is a breath of Australian life here and there, but many dozens of youthful Australians are endeavouring in vain to-day to get just such loose, easy rhyme into print. It was not until 1869—a year which is unique in Australian literary history, since it saw the birth of four of our true singers—that Kendall's real voice was heard. In 1868 Kendall had married, and "Leaves from Australian Forests" was published in 1869. In the "Preparatory Sonnets," in the "Dedication," in "September in Australia," "Araluen," "Bell-birds," perhaps "Arakoon," and "Rose Lorraine," the voice was gathering music. Though the book involved a loss to his publishers of ninety pounds, Kendall gained courage from the publication.

It is a remarkable fact that when Kendall was reading the proofs of "Leaves from Australian Forests," towards the end of 1869, four infant boys that were destined to leave as indelible a mark on Australian literature as Kendall himself, were beginning to lift up their voices in four different corners of the world:—David McKee Wright, in a farm-house in Ireland; Edwin James Brady, at Carcoar, N.S.W.; William Henry Ogilvie, near Kelso, Scotland; and Roderick Joseph Quinn, at a little house in Surry

Hills, Sydney. The first three were born in August; the latter in November, so that when Kendall was reading his criticisms, they were all in long clothes.

After the publication of his book, Kendall took up journalistic work, and, in endeavouring to imitate the topical verse of the day, managed to produce some very poor stuff and earn very little for it. But the real fire within him was not put out by forced effort; and in "Songs from the Mountains," he had found the way to say all that was in him, and said it.

There is something of the splendid loneliness, the austere beauty and the cold, green stillness of the ranges in his dedicatory poem "To a Mountain." Feeling that was present here and there in "Leaves from Australian Forests" began to move with emotion and a marching hint of passion.

It is present here:—

To thee, O father of the stately peaks,
Above me in the loftier light—to thee,
Imperial brother of those awful hills,
Whose feet are set in splendid spheres of flame,
Whose heads are where the gods are, and whose sides
Of strength are belted round with all the zones
Of all the world, I dedicate these songs.

A strange dedication this! But how thoroughly, how surely it gives us the keynote of Kendall's best work. To that mountain as to his God he unbare his heart:—

But in these pages there are other tones
In which thy large, superior voice is not—
Through which no beauty that resembles thine
Has ever shone. These are the broken words
Of blind occasions, when the World has come
Between me and my Dream. No song is here
Of mighty compass; for my singing robes
I've worn in stolen moments. All my days
Have been the days of a laborious life.
And ever on my struggling soul has burned
The fierce heat of this hurried sphere. But thou
To whose fair majesty I dedicate
My book of rhymes—thou hast the perfect rest
Which makes the heaven of the highest gods!

And what splendour he has seen and felt therein does not die away in the noble close.

I began by telling you that I had chosen Henry Kendall because of his self-revelation, and I have not yet touched that phase of his work. Kendall, at an early age, showed that he had the courage both to criticise and express himself. At nineteen he wrote a letter to the editor of the *Cornhill* magazine, asking him to accept some of his verses. Undaunted by that gentleman's silence he sent a copy of the same letter to the *Athenaeum*. In this paper his letter and some of his verses were printed. There is no record of England's critics having received this young singer as a possible Chatterton, nor of the public being in the least interested. When

was the general public ever interested in an unknown poet since the people of Athens assembled by the sea-shore to judge Sophocles? But Kendall was buoyed up by the notice and continued to improve his work. Looking over the mass of his poems, I feel more and more certain that Kendall was a poet who would have meant much more than he does to our literature had he been given the stimulus and impetus of the genuine praise he craved.

By the time Kendall had broken down in health and felt the hopelessness of the struggle, Australia was beginning to realise that he was a true singer of nature and a poet of personal experience. Outside these two spheres, you can, I think, dismiss all that Kendall has written. His aboriginal songs do not touch the soul of that strange being, the Australian black. His topical verses are only fair, and most of them you can be sure were done against the poet's will. In "Cooranbean," Kendall touched a note of shuddering horror and passionate despair. I would not deny it immortality; nor "Hybrasil" with its reflective sadness. But these poems stand quite apart from the bulk of his work.

Here is an example of his simplicity when dealing with nature:

The soft white feet of afternoon
Are on the shining meads.
The breeze is as a pleasant tune,
Amongst the happy reeds.

You will find that verse in "Orara," published in "Songs from the Mountains." But here is a better example, which occurs in "After Many Years," from the same volume:—

There is a river in the range
I love to think about;
Perhaps the searching feet of change
Have never found it out.
Ah! oftentimes I used to look
Upon its banks, and long
To steal the beauty of that brook
And put it in a song.

And this brings me at last to the tragedy underlying all the song, the heart-rending little sob of anguish that quavers still under these words whenever we chance to read them—the cry of the child for the elusive star—the unattainable something which holds the secret source of endeavour. Call it what you will. The poet cries:—

Across the main a vision
Of sunset coasts, and skies,
And widths of waters gleaming
Enchant my human eyes.
I, who have sinned and suffered,
Have sought—with tears have sought—
To rule my life with goodness,
And shape it to my thought.
And yet there is no refuge
To shield me from distress,
Except the realm of slumber
And great forgetfulness.

We cannot break his slumber. Yet neither is his voice silent, for the Eternal Thing that suffers through all humanity is in his terrible picture, "On a Street," a poem, which with all its faulty lines and mis-placed words, is staggering in its wretched and appalling picture of squalor, poverty, despair and terror. Touching it is like placing a warm finger on the emptiness of human effort enshrined in the tragic little body of a dead child.

I dread that street—its haggard face
I have not seen for eight long years;
A mother's curse is on the place,
(There's blood, my reader, in her tears).
No child of man shall ever track,
Through filthy dust, the singer's feet—
A fierce old memory drags me back;
I hate its name—I dread that street.

Upon the lap of green, sweet lands,
Whose months are like your English Mays,
I try to hide in Lethe's sands
The bitter, old Bohemian days,
But sorrow speaks in singing leaf,
And trouble talketh with the tide;
The skirts of a stupendous grief
Are trailing ever at my side.

How gladly would I change my theme,
Or cease the song and steal away,
But on the hill and by the stream
A ghost is with me night and day!
A dreadful darkness, full of wild,
Chaotic visions, comes to me:
I seem to hear a dying child,
Its mother's face I seem to see.

I cannot read you the rest. Looking at these lines I seem to be looking at the most completely bared soul, bleeding on its own cruel cross, that I have ever known in literature. That it is a weak soul matters nothing. The self-revelation is agonising even to the bitter personal end:—

But still I hate that haggard street,
Its filthy court, its alleys wild:
In dreams of it I always meet
The phantom of a wailing child.
The name of it begets distress—
Ah, song be silent! show no more
The lady in the perished dress,
The scholar on the tap-room floor.

Shall we accuse this poem—as we will might accuse its companion poem "Araluen"—of being too personal? That is a great accusation to make, for in the close personal touch lies its worth. "Araluen" was written of the poet's little daughter who died in infancy, and is a fitting close for a survey of the work of one so unutterably tragic as Henry Kendall.

Take this rose, and very gently place it on the tender, deep
 Mosses where our little darling, Araluen, lies asleep.
 Put the blossom close to baby—kneel with me, my love, and pray:
 We must leave the bird we've buried—say good-bye to her to-day.
 In the shadow of our trouble we must go to other lands,
 And the flowers we have fostered will be left to other hands:
 Other eyes will watch them growing—other feet will softly tread
 Where two hearts are nearly breaking, where so many tears are shed.
 Bitter is the world we live in: life and love are mixed with pain:
 We will never see these daisies—never water them again.

You that sit and sob beside me—you, upon whose golden head
 Many rains of many sorrows have from day to day been shed;
 Who because your love was noble, faced with me the lot austere,
 Ever pressing with its hardship on the man of letters here—
 Let me feel that you are near me, lay your hand within mine own;
 You are all I have to live for, now that we are left alone. [weep;
 Three there were, but one has vanished. Sins of mine have made you
 But forgive your baby's father now that baby is asleep.
 Let us go, for night is falling: leave the darling with her flowers;
 Other hands will come and tend them—other friends in other hours.

REFERENCE BOOKS:—

- Poems by Charles Harper* (Melbourne, 1883).
Poems of Adam Lindsay Gordon (Bookstall Company, Sydney, 1918).
Poems of Henry Kendall (Angus & Robertson, Ltd., Sydney, 1920).

DALEY

Song was his friend, and, by a lyric thread,
 He drew the waggon of Romance this way
 And tossed her laughing spoils about our day
 That we might know pure Beauty had not fled.
 Old Poesy his wine and Rhyme his bread,
 Much did he find to share with mates born gay
 In blithe Bohemia that heard him play
 Harps of the wind, full-stringed by fingers dead.

A singing dreamer in a singing land,
 His jesting lips gave mirth to Death—not tears.
 Child of the bards, he squandered bardic fire
 On many a bush-green tale he told his band—
 So spilled his wine and scattered down the years,
 Love and the burst, white bubbles of desire.

EDMOND

When discord raged in terms of party hate,
 And little thinking narrowed every way,
 He pointed to a larger, richer day
 For those who dreamed and feared not to be great.
 His arguments of continental weight
 Were edged with mirth, keen-sharpened for the fray.
 As with a splendid scorn he sought to slay
 The paltry haggling at the future's gate.

Old Gallie fire within a Scottish brain,
 Blown to full flame by our Australian wind
 The things he wrote became a people's creed;
 While statesmen made of them a bold refrain,
 And, leaving all the broken past behind,
 Urged Edmond's vision as a nation's need.

VICTOR J. DALEY.

Sweet are the pleasures that to verse belong
 And doubly sweet a brotherhood in song. —*Keats.*

When I was a school-girl, I can remember an Irish mate of mine sitting disconsolately in the playground one day. When I asked her what was the matter, she looked up mournfully and said: "Don't you know? Daley's dead." I remember sitting down sympathetically beside her and saying nothing, because I did not know who Daley was. It was years later in a suburban cottage in Sydney that I heard of Daley again. I had gone home to tea with another Irish mate, when, during the meal, someone informed the red-bearded master of the house, who sat at the head of the table, that I liked reading poetry. "What poetry?" he asked, carving for his big hungry brood. "Byron," I replied timidly. I shall never forget how he jumped, set down his knife and fork and, reaching for a book on a shelf nearby, cried: "Tut! tut! Byron! Have you read Daley?"

I see him now, one finger pointing out the lines as he read:—

"There is an end to all our griefs;
 Little the red worm of the grave
 Will vex us when our days are done."
 So changed my thought: up-gazing then
 On gray-piled stones that seemed the cairns
 Of dead and long-forgotten chiefs—
 The men of old, the poor wild men
 Who, under dim lights, fought a brave,
 Sad fight of Life, where hope was none,
 In the vague, voiceless, far-off years—
 It changed again to present pain,
 And I saw Sorrow everywhere:
 In blackened trees and rust-red ferns,
 Blasted by bush-fires, and the sun;
 And by the salt-flood—salt as tears—
 Where the wild apple-trees hung low,
 And evermore stooped down to stare
 At their drowned shadows in the wave,
 Wringing their knotted hands of woe;
 And the dark swamp-oaks, row on row,
 Lined either bank—a sombre train
 Of mourners with down-streaming hair.

"That's what you want to read," he said, and, before I could put in a defence for Byron, his voice read on over the cooling meat:—

The day and its delights are done;
So all delights and days expire;
Down in the dim, sad West the sun
Is dying like a dying fire.

The fiercest lances of his light
Are spent: I watch him droop and die
Like a great king who falls in fight;
None dared the duel of his eye,
Living, but, now his eye is dim.
The eyes of all may stare at him.

My Irish mate's mother, who had been cutting up bread at a side table, came and leaned over the reader's chair at this, and he, turning over the pages, forgetful of me, began again:—

Spellbound by a sweet fantasy
At evenglow I stand
Beside an opaline strange sea
That rings a sunset land.

The rich lights fade out one by one,
And, like a peony
Drowning in wine, the crimson sun
Sinks down in that strange sea.

"That's the poetry you want to read," he said, looking up at me, and, for a second time, I endeavoured to speak for Byron, when my mate's mother said, reaching out to turn the pages of the book, "Oh, don't you know 'The Old Wife and the New'? That's my favourite."

"It can't beat 'Andy! I am Your Mate!'" put in my mate's brother. Then the whole family immediately began to discuss Daley as intimately as if Daley himself had often been a diner at that humble table in the blithe Bohemian days when he talked and sang the sun away.

"You take that home with you and read it," ended my mate's father, handing Daley across the table to me, and proceeding to serve out the meal.

I took him, and he came as a friend into my heart. Australia is a singing land. The bosom of our nation is a nest wherein the bird of song may live in peace, no matter what despairs and heartache, failures and lack of appreciation rage without. Around the camp-fires of the West, and in the dwellings of our fathers, there the nest is never empty, for the brown men of the roads dream dreams; and the blood of our fathers still bounds to the music of the bag-pipe and harp.

Victor Daley came out of Ireland to us, and never did a brown nest welcome so truly a green singing bird. Before he had been here very long he had begun to understand something of the strange soul of Australia—a soul in the making then, for a nation's soul is a mighty thing born of the blood of long achievement.

Daley found his voice immediately when, in 1878, at the age of 20, he arrived in Australia. He had not come here direct from the fairy raths of Creeve Roe, near which he had been born. He

came from England, whither he had gone at the age of 14. Nevertheless, he brought the Red Branch Knights to Australia with him.

In the year that he first breathed the wild bush fragrance of our land, the literary centre of the nation was Melbourne; though John Farrell, seven years Daley's senior, had just published his first book "Ephemera" in Albury; and James Brunton Stephens, already a prominent poet at 43, was bringing out "Mute Discourse" in Brisbane. At this time George Essex Evans was a boy of fifteen, at school in the Channel Islands, and, although she was writing well, Mary Hannay Foott had not completed "Where the Pelican Builds, and other Poems," which appeared in 1885, the year, by the way, in which Mrs. Campbell Praed published her novel, "The Head Station."

Still, it was a busy little literary world into which Daley stepped. Marcus Clarke had already re-written and published his great novel, "For the Term of His Natural Life," and was enjoying the fruits of its fame in Melbourne, where Ada Cambridge, who had arrived eight years previously, at the age of 26, was writing serials for *The Australasian*. The veteran poet, George Gordon McCrea, was then 46, and doubtless little dreaming that his two-year-old son, Hugh, would one day produce the unique volume of verse, "Satyrs and Sunlight."

Daley's father, who had been a soldier, died in the boy's infancy, and it was purely as a lover that the poet came to us. When he grew restless in the civil servant position he held in Plymouth, his step-father suggested Daley's going to relatives in Australia. The young man gladly consented. Well-educated at the Christian Brothers' School in Devonport, England, filled with the imaginative fire of a thousand tales, which he had heard during the long years of his childhood spent in Ireland with his grandparents, Daley sailed into Sydney just at the time that Jules Francois Archibald was feeling the birth of *The Bulletin* stir in his daring brain. This paper, eventually, was destined to move the literary centre from Melbourne to Sydney. No one knew at the time that a roving lad from Ireland and a poor boy, shivering over Gibbon's history in the Glasgow Public Library, were to help Archibald to bring this to pass. Yet it is a fact that when Archibald was collecting and polishing the first *Bulletin* paragraphs, Victor Daley reached Australia, and James Edmond began to pack his bag for Dunedin. Edmond put a giant's strength into the paper; but Daley blew an elfin horn of delightful fantasy over its pages—the charm of whose fragrance lingers still, side by side with the more important influence of Edmond.

Daley contributed some verses to *The Victorian Review* shortly after his arrival in Australia, and this brought him into contact with his writing brothers. He tells of his own meeting with Marcus Clarke, who has left us Australian fiction which has not been equalled in its description of early Australian life by that of any subsequent novelist. I say this despite Mrs. Aeneas Gunn's

delightful "We of the Never Never," which is not exactly a novel.

But what has all this to do with Victor Daley? My friends, I was speaking of Marcus Clarke, the London boy, who came to Australia at the age of 18 and became a journalist in Melbourne to join the staff of the public library there in 1871, and later write a book which ranks with the world's great novels. I was speaking of him because he knew Daley, though at that time he had no idea Daley was so soon to eclipse all that he himself had ever written in verse. Clarke's verse is not very good. Most of it is best forgotten, but, when the young Daley met him, he did not think that. Marcus Clarke put none of the powerful passion and colour of the prose of "For the Term of His Natural Life" into any of his verse.

I fancy you are thinking still, this has nothing whatever to do with Daley. No. But I am going to be more discursive still and talk to you about some other people who, while Daley was preparing his first *Bulletin* verses, were also dipping their pens into hot ink to pour out prose and verse for that paper. I am going to do this because I am talking to you about Daley, and, though Daley was a dreamer, a stranger, and a lonely soul, were he to come into this room now, he would look about for companions. So it is quite fitting that he should have them. In his own manner, once, in a wild mood, he put it this way:—

If beings of Mythology

Could live at my commands

Briareus I'd choose to be

Who had a hundred hands;

And every hand of mine

Would hold a pint of wine.

And of those beakers ninety-nine

With white wine and with red

Should brim for dear old friends of mine.

The living and the dead.

By Pluto there would be

A noble revelry!

Having quoted that, and knowing, as we all do, that one of Daley's publications was entitled, "Wine and Roses," I am not going to assume that he, like old Omar, did not sing the glory of the vine sometimes. But that is not his most important subject by any means, and, if I have let him revel in the company of his old comrades again, it is because Daley, the real Daley, scarcely exists away from companions.

He loved to talk, as what Irishman does not? He had a wonderful gift for story-telling, and many are the amusing tales told by and about this beloved Bohemian. I am not going to introduce his comrades here one by one. Rather I wish to regard all men as his comrades, and, while he is reading the first issues of *The Bulletin* in 1881, look about at his writing brothers, amongst whom, before his untimely death, he was so surely to become the best loved.

I am going to draw your attention first to James Edmond, who turned over the first issue of *The Bulletin* simultaneously with Daley. But let me create for you, if I can, something of the atmosphere of that early *Bulletin* by reading you an extract from an article written by R. F. Hill in a recent *Theatre Magazine*. Mr. Hill is writing from St. Vincent's Hospital, and the paragraph reads:—

The proximity of the hospital to Darlinghurst Gaol reminded Charles Collins—is there an older-established photographer in Sydney?—that between twenty-five and thirty years ago he had visited the debtors' prison there to take a photograph of J. F. Archibald and John Haynes. "They were then," remarks Mr. Collins, "the proprietors of the *Bulletin*, and had refused on principle to satisfy a £1,000-verdict secured against them by the Moores for libel in connection with their conduct of Clontarf." Sympathy was so much with Messrs. Archibald and Haynes that the money was publicly subscribed. The result was that they did not remain long in prison. Mr. Collins went to the gaol of his own accord, and donated the proceeds from the sale of the photographs to the Archibald-Haynes Fund then being raised. At first he exhibited copies in a showcase outside his George Street premises. But it wasn't long before the police compelled him to remove them because of the way in which traffic was held up through the crowds they were attracting.

There you have the atmosphere. For, in those early days before Edmond gave force of character to it, *The Bulletin* fought its brave way by means of sensation. S. H. Prior has added newer dignity to the paper, so that its old tone has changed a good deal, and for the better I think.

Here is Edmond's account of his own life from his own pen:—

"My people came from the East of Scotland, and I am a mixture of Scotch and French (Norman). I had no ancestor who came in with the Conqueror or the corn-curer or any other great historical character, but one grandmother (I had two) possessed a father who grew vegetables on a small patch of land in the old dukery. The family moved, and its fortunes (such as they were) slumped, for I was born (21/4/59) in a two-roomed house up two stairs in James Street, Calton, Glasgow.

My first recollections are of Kidderminster, where my father removed when I was one year old. He rose to be owner of a small and not very successful carpet factory, where the despised Kidderminster carpet was made. He died, and his fortunes flickered out again when I was twelve. My mother took me back to Scotland, and died when I was 16 and one of the pillars of the house earning £30 a year in a fire insurance office (now defunct, but I didn't kill it).

Got most of my education in Glasgow Public Library, which was the warmest place in the city, where there was no charge for admission.

I had an intense desire to get away to a warmer climate. Kidderminster averaged at least 3deg. higher than Glasgow, and wasn't so foggy. So I got to Dunedin in 1880 by sailing ship (steerage), and promptly changed my mind and moved to Melbourne (steerage). Made a living at the dreary commercial game there, and later at Brisbane, and then at Rockhampton. At Rockhampton the commercial game deserted me, and I lent my valuable services to the *Morning Bulletin* as proof-reader (£2 10s per week); that was in 1884.

I found I had struck the one thing in life I could take an interest in. William McIlwraith, editor and proprietor, was a hard nigger-driver and a good teacher, and on a provincial paper in poor circumstances I

was the one travelled member of the staff, and in three months I developed into sub-editor and occasional leader-writer (£4 a week, paid in gold, not Government paper).

I shifted to the *Sydney Bulletin* in 1886 (£4 a week again). The literary staff then consisted of three in Sydney (J. F. Archibald, Wilfred Blacket and myself) and Edmund Fisher in Melbourne. When Blacket left and went to the Bar the staff for a while was two, and the paper supported them with difficulty in those days. . . .

I still write as much as I can, though I don't keep regular office hours. A few remaining ambitions with which I hope your sympathies are:—

1. To move the Federal Capital into the tropics as an assertion that we are a White Tropical Power—the only one—and that the North isn't an outcast place where a white politician can't live.
2. To see Australia divided into 12 or 16 small States, the Big Political Estates having a tendency to be neglected and weed grown round the edges.
3. To see the Port Augusta-Darwin railway finished by way of taking formal possession of the North.
4. To see borrowing absolutely abolished.

I have several hundred other ambitions, but these are few to go on with."

I read you this, not because it is a good sample of Edmond's prose, but because it shows you his outstanding features—love of figures, love of historical facts and imagination.

In this extract from his book, "A Journalist and Two Bears," which H. G. Wells found delightful, you catch something of his humorous spirit as well:—

It was the Thinnest Man in the Club who rose in sudden protest against the remarks of the Politician. The Politician had been denouncing compulsory military service, and was temporarily out of breath. "Voluntary armies are no good," said the Thinnest Man decisively. "All my military service was with a voluntary force, and the army that opposed us was voluntary also. Two more incapable gangs never got together. Speaking as a soldier—"

The Man of Greatest Circumference howled with derision, and the Slow Man, after a moment spent in thought, decided on his line of action, and howled likewise.

"What's the joke?" asked the Man of Greatest Circumference. "I never knew that you were in the army. When was it, and where, and how?"

"I was a general in those days," replied the Thinnest Man with profound seriousness. "At least I was a kind of general. I was a full private in the evening—at least, not quite full, yet I had had one drink—but my promotion was rapid. Napoleon wasn't a circumstance to me. Just about three hours after the superannuated policeman rang the dinner bell—"

"But what in the name of thunder did the policeman, whether he was superannuated or not, ring the dinner bell for?" asked the Tallest Man.

"He rang it as a sign that the campaign was about to start," said the Thinnest Man impatiently. "I wish you would let me finish. As I was trying to explain, I rose to be a general in the course of the night, and about five in the morning, just before I and the demented sewing-machine canvasser ran out of the town, I became vice-president of the Republic."

"What Republic?" demanded the Politician.

"Mexico—a fine large republic, I can tell you. It was at the City of Free Drinks —"

"City of what?"

"Well, it was hardly a city. It was the Town of Free Drinks."

"And—and—and—well, what pay did you get for all these extraordinary services —"

"There was no pay at all. The campaign didn't last long enough. I lost some luggage, too, and spent about a hundred dollars making the army drunk. But there was a kind of set-off. I didn't pay my hotel bill, and I got away with the entire artillery—"

"Single-handed?"

"Yes, it consisted of an old revolver lent by the hotelkeeper. I ran away with it in a moment of absence of mind, so to speak. And then the President escaped with the tablecloth."

"But you spoke of an insane sewing-machine canvasser. What made him insane?"

"Oh! I think he was always that way. He wasn't quite mad, you know, only a sort of monomaniac. Very interesting person."

"And what about the battle?" broke in the Man with the Best Top Hat.

"The battle! I never said there was any battle. Still there would have been, only for the dog—"

The Man who Belonged to the Legal Profession butted in, and tried to evolve some kind of order out of chaos.

"This is the first appearance of a dog in this somewhat confused narrative," he said. "Which army did the animal command, or what was his official position? Was he a civil or military dog, for instance?"

"He wasn't civil, and he wasn't military," shouted the Thinnest Man impatiently.

"Clerical dog, I suppose then—another instance of the interference and overbearing character of a church which has outlived its usefulness—"

"Now, who in all Christendom ever heard of a clerical dog? He was just dog, I tell you."

"Well, what breed was he, and why did he interfere, and what is it all about?" demanded the Bald Headed Man, clutching the air with both hands.

The Thinnest Man wore the aspect of one who, having been interrupted too often in the relation of a plain, unvarnished tale, prays for patience and sanity.

"The dog, if you must interrupt, was any old kind of a dog. He interfered for the same reason that any old kind of a dog would—because the hostile forces were standing on his master's vegetables. I didn't see him, but I heard him in the distance—him or some other dog. It might be any dog. I don't profess to know the sound of one dog from another when I had never met the dog and didn't even know he was there. It was just before the army fell down—"

"Why," clamoured the Man with the Presentation Gold Watch, thus taking the words out of the mouth of the Man with the Principal Feet, "Why did the army fall down? It wasn't shot, was it?"

"Shot? No! It only let go its hold, and it fell down as any army might, and went to sleep."

"Look here," said the Man of Greatest Circumference, "I think this story might be started from the beginning. Either commence with some information about the City of Free Drinks, or else tell us who the demented sewing-machine canvasser was, and then progress steadily till we reach the dog."

You can see from that that Edmond's is a grotesque rather than a whimsical laughter. I think "Henry Horsecollar," one of his numerous pen-names, gives an admirable impression of his mirth. But he can be very serious. His visions have been as vast as our continent, his dreams as spacious. He is still living, and forms a link with that early *Bulletin* and that young Daley. There are, indeed, many such living links, including that grand old friend of all the writers, William Macleod, first artist of the paper and its present managing director.

S. H. Prior, though little has appeared in print over his own name, is now an important literary force, seeking the best, and eager to raise the general standard of Australian work. He became financial editor of *The Bulletin* in 1905, associate editor in 1911, and editor-in-chief in 1915.

In 1881 Marcus Clarke died. Shall I say, as so many people have said, that the hope of the Australian novel died with him? In 1880 T. A. Browne (Rolf Boldrewood), had published "Robbery Under Arms." I think I should do both the present Australian novelists and Clarke and Browne an injustice were I to speak of them all in the same breath. Except for the novels of Mrs. Campbell Praed, we have had scarcely any romance since then. But when Browne was writing "Robbery Under Arms" there was a little boy in New Zealand, named Arthur H. Adams, who was in latter years to produce several novels of distinction.

It was in that year—1880—a year before Clarke's death, that Ethel Turner, then a little girl of eight, arrived in Australia from England, and breathed the air of the Australian child, whose character she was in after years so humourously to portray.

Kendall was buried at Waverley in 1882, and Daley wrote of his dead friend:—

Dreamer of dreams, thy song and dreams are done.
Down where thou sleepest in earth's secret bosom
There is no sorrow and no joy for thee.
Who canst not see what stars at eve there be,
Nor evermore at morn the green dawn blossom
Into the golden king-flower of the sun
Across the golden sea.

But haply there shall come in days to be
One who shall hear his own heart beating faster,
Plucking a rose sprung from thy heart beneath.
And from his soul, as sword from out its sheath.
Song shall leap forth where now, O silent master,
On thy lone grave beside the sounding sea.
I lay this laurel-wreath.

That one was already Daley himself. There is a whole world of imaginative fancy in Daley's work and his vision soared into happy, holy places which our melancholy Kendall never knew, even in his most inspirational moments.

In 1882 John Farrell published "Two Stories" in Melbourne, and, at John Farrell's name, I must stop, as Daley himself would stop, for the two men were firm friends. Farrell enjoyed almost

as great a popularity among his fellow-men as Daley. Farrell had come to Australia with his Irish parents from Buenos Aires, in 1852, and by 1882 his first instalment of "Jenny" was appearing in *The Bulletin*, for which paper he wrote a great deal of rough verse. "How He Died," Farrell's most popular ballad, appeared in that paper in 1883. Doubtless Henry Lawson, who was a lad of sixteen on his father's farm at the time, read the poem, and Edward Dyson, a boy of eighteen in Victoria, may have done likewise.

The ballad is crude, compared with those of Lawson, but it is unique in that it contains a plot. Daley's fine ballad, "His Mate," is made of richer material. I like it better; but that may be because I like Daley's work so much. I come to his verses now with eyes wide open to his many faults as a poet. I remember it was with a pang of regret that after many years, I found that Daley was not Keats, as in my school-days I had imagined he was. He owed a lot to Keats, but his pipe was made of pure Australian reeds, filled, as they were, with the green fire of Ireland.

Farrell had not found Keats; but he knew his Tennyson well, and, in the one fine poem he left our literature, there is ample evidence of a strong, passionate nature that could love the best in the most thoroughly English of all our poets.

Here are two stanzas from "Australia to England," which Farrell wrote on June 22nd, 1897:—

A heaving sea of life, that beats
Like England's heart of pride to-day.
And up from roaring miles of streets
Flings on the roofs its human spray:
And fluttering miles of flags aflow.
And cannon's voice, and boom of bell.
And seas of fire to-night, as though
A hundred cities flamed and fell;

While, under many a fair festoon
And flowering crescent, set ablaze
With all the dyes that English June
Can lend to deck a day of days.
And past where mart and palace rise.
And shrine and temple lift their spears,
Below five million misted eyes
Goes a grey Queen of Sixty Years—

This work of Farrell's, so utterly unlike anything else he wrote, is purely inspirational. And how eternal is the sentiment he expresses in the last verse:—

And greater dreams! O Englishmen,
Be sure the safest time of all
For even the mightiest State is when
Not even the least desires its fall!
Make England stand supreme for aye,
Because supreme for peace and good.
Warned well by wrecks of yesterday
That strongest feet may slip in blood!

Daley admired these lines, as did J. Brunton Stephens, who wrote to Farrell from Brisbane about them.

And now may I leave Farrell, pursuing his busy journalistic life on the *Daily Telegraph*, and Daley preparing "At Dawn and Dusk" for the press, as well as writing his witty prose and imaginative verse for *The Bulletin*, and take you to Queensland? There George Essex Evans, who had already published "The Repentance of Magdalene Despar, and Other Poems" in 1891, was finishing "Lorraine, and Other Verses," which was to appear in 1898; and J. Brunton Stephens, was writing good verse.

Brunton Stephens, who had been educated at the Edinburgh University, reached Australia in April, 1866, the very month and year in which the Melbourne poet, Bernard O'Dowd, was born. So Stephens preceded Essex Evans by fifteen years. The work of both these poets is characterised by thoughtful workmanship.

Stephens wrote of Australia in 1877:—

She is not yet: but he whose ear
Thrills to that finer atmosphere
Where footfalls of appointed things
Reverberant of days to be,
Are heard in forecast echoes.
Like wave-beats from a viewless sea—
Hears in the voiceful tremors of the sky
Auroral heralds whispering, "She is nigh."

I must confess that I like Stephen's novel in verse, "Convict Once." There is humour, too, in his "To a Black Gin." When first he came to Brisbane he was a teacher, and one of the boys he taught was my father, who remembered him as a popular master with his boys, though not a very strict one. But by 1897, the year we have here reached, I was a child in the Queensland bush, listening to the teamsters round our barn reading "The Man From Snowy River."

Henry Lawson, who had published "In the Days when the World was Wide" a year before, was also well-known about that camp-fire. I dare say Daley was too, but I recall no memory of him. I can remember echoes of Brunton Stephens, but none of Essex Evans.

The latter was writing frequently for *The Bulletin*, *The Australasian*, and other papers about this time, while James Edmond was dreaming the great dream of the Commonwealth, and forcing home large truths with a pen of living might. Mention of *The Australasian* recalls the fact that this, our oldest weekly, has exerted a continuous force in the making of our literature. Under its present able editor, W. P. Hurst, its fine traditions are more than maintained.

About this time all men were beginning to feel the birth of a new nation stir within their blood. The singing men were singing it, the writing men writing it. When men are moved, deeply stirred, aroused, thrilled, they become eloquent: and many were the eloquent pens fighting a great fight for Australia then—a fight of mind, which won us the privilege of calling ourselves a nation. Those pens made the free-born Anzacs, who were then, most of

them, little boys and growing lads in the midst of the singing multitude. I say multitude, for always in Australia have we had a multitude of singers. We left Daley and Farrell writing in Sydney. They were only two, for in this very year we have reached, 1897, Christopher John Brennan, having returned from Europe, published his "XXI. Poems: Towards the Source". John Le Gay Brereton brought out his "Sweetheart Mine," which had been preceded a year before by "The Song of Brotherhood, and Other Verses" and "Perdita"; Arthur Bayldon published "Poems" in Brisbane; Paterson was reaping fame and praise from "The Man from Snowy River"; and Henry Lawson beginning to make his voice ring from Cape York to the Swan River.

Poetry and song belong to youth, and here, in the dawn of our nationhood, we had many voices whose owners felt the passionate hour of our birth in their very bones.

George Essex Evans sang of Australia in the year 1900:—

Free-born of Nations, Virgin white,
Not won by blood nor ringed with steel,
Thy throne is on a loftier height,
Deep-rooted in the Commonwealth!
O Thou, for whom the strong have wrought,
And poets sung with souls aflame,
Born of long hope and patient thought,
A mighty name—
We pledge thee faith that shall not swerve,
Our Land, Our Lady, breathing high
The thought that makes it love to serve,
And life to die!

Crown her—most worthy to be praised—
With eyes uplifted to the morn;
For on this day a flag is raised,
A triumph won, a nation born!
And Ye vast Army of the Dead,
From mine and city, plain and sea,
Who fought and dared, who toiled and bled,
That this might be,
Draw round us in this hour of fate—
Here, where thy children's children stand—
With unseen lips, O consecrate
And bless the land!

When Evans sang that, I declare—by the combined pens of his brother-singers and dreamers, by the fire and force of the great army of earnest men and women in Australia—by all that was strongest and most enduring in our blood, a nation was born. How very beautiful that birth was in its simplicity, its very humility was shown by every line in one of the finest odes in our language, Roderick Quinn's "House of the Commonwealth."

But I have reached 1901 now, and I am reminded, that while I was carried away on the thought of that white Australian dream of Commonwealth, Daley, away in Sydney, has published "At Dawn and Dusk." It appeared in 1898, a year before Arthur Jose's "History of Australasia." Daley's book not only marked a

definite growth in our literature, but it showed clearly that Daley possessed an imagination, a love for lost romance, and a true lyric quality in lines such as these:—

I have been dreaming all a summer day
Of rare and dainty poems I would write;
Love-lyrics delicate as lilac-scent
Soft idylls woven of wind, and flower, and stream,
And songs and sonnets carven in fine gold.

I should take each of Daley's books, which I hope you all have, and show you just where he fails and just where he succeeds: but you must form your own opinions and judge Daley by Daley. There is a thinness of expression at times about his work, but you cannot deny the sweetness of his voice. He can be very, very careless. He can even be slovenly and let his lines run away from their thought, so that expression is lost in a scatter of delicate words; but bring him home to the hearts of your children and the road will be clearer to Shelley and even Keats.

I think you will agree with me that "At Dawn and Dusk" contains his finer pieces of verse. J. F. Archibald once told me that he considered "Fragments" in this volume Daley's best effort. You may not agree, but you must admit that for descriptive Australian colour, this Irishman's work is sometimes remarkable. Indeed, Daley is at his best when he is least Irish and most Australian. Daley, I am told, liked "The Old Wife and the New" above all the rest of his pieces. I give my preference to "A Sunset Fantasy," if you will allow me to slip in "Anacreon," which you will find in "Wine and Roses," somewhere near it. All the same, I am not sure that "The Old Wife and the New" is not, in its sincere way, better than either the fantasy or fancy. For yourselves, you might be well employed catching the faery spirit from all Daley's verse. You might very well contrast his method of telling a tale in verse with that of any of our present ballad writers, while, for almost any class, he is one of the best mates of Romance you could possibly find. Daley, too, has very noticeably influenced subsequent Australian writers. He is more concerned with death than life as a subject, with the past than the present: but try reading "His Mate" to your class next time you have an opportunity.

Daley got his share of Australian praise for his work, just as Brunton Stephens and Farrell had received theirs before him, just as Evans was to receive it after him. Daley answered the praise by producing better work. But very soon all these friends began to depart one by one. Brunton Stephens went first in 1902. Farrell died in 1904: and in 1905, after a long illness, Daley, a young man of 47, followed. Which brings me back to the playground where I started, and my Irish mate saying sadly, "Daley's dead."

Many of his friends remained, and I might keep you all the afternoon speaking of them. Not the least of these was the late Bertram Stevens. We have reached the end of Daley's life, but, as yet, I have not mentioned his prose writings to you. He wrote

prose, both under his own name and that of Creeve Roe. Since he is always alive there, as whimsical and delightful as the day he penned his humorous sketches and stories, we may feel him with us again, even through the medium of one or two extracts.

Daley's prose is nearly always joyous. He has the bubble of pure merriment to burst, and does it frequently. Very simple and very clear are his utterances. Dew is on the garden when he writes of it. Purity and freshness are his friends. He owes something, I think, to the prose-master, Robert Louis Stevenson. A hint of that clean, chastity of expression that R.L.S. gets in "Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes," sometimes appears in Daley's prose. The poet's absolute joy in the baliffs must have been the despair of every landlord he met.

This introduction to "The Coin of Chosroes" will do for an example of his style:—

Devine walked down the hill in the early morning with the heart in his bosom singing like a lark. In front of him was the sea—a great, blue-robed lazy goddess glowing with the kisses of the sun. The shadows of the trees in the gully were soft and alluring. The blue-grey smoke-spirals that rose from the chimneys of the red tiled houses were morning-prayers, and each house was a temple.

Devine gazed down upon the roofs of Manly, and the council chambers, and the whisky chateau of the bowling club, and the distant chute, and it seemed to him as if all the kingdoms of the earth and the glory thereof were spread before him.

"It is good to be alive and to be here," he murmured as he lit his pipe.

The reason why Devine was so pleased with himself and the world at large was that the worst had happened. The bailiff was in his house, and Devine was as happy as Damocles was when the sword had fallen. An old Greek writer states that the sword in question was a wooden one, anyhow. Most swords of the kind are—when you examine them.

For Devine read Daley, and you have this merry fellow's attitude towards the things that have made life unromantic.

Do you need another example? In a number of excellent stories and sketches which Bertram Stevens collected, there is scarcely one which is not worth its place in a volume.

Take a few random remarks. In his cheerful account of Norfolk Island, he says of the people:—

Very often they are without eggs, although multitudes of fowls may be seen scratching around every holding. The hens, I was informed, "lay away," and their owners are too tired to go egg-hunting. But they gird up their loins and pursue the Leghorn to her lair when they have visitors.

The Roman Catholic Cathedral is on another hill. Earnest Protestants are in the habit of referring to the Church of Rome as the Scarlet Woman that sits up on the Seven Hills. They do her less than justice. She sits upon every hill in every town or village that I have seen, where her children are to be found.

A few months before he died, Daley wrote this in "The Rest House":—

I have discovered that I myself am an egotist of a sort. My egotism takes the form of a craving for the society of my friends. I want them

to be on hand to cheer me up when I feel depressed. And when the time comes to leave this earthly scene, I would like them to go with me.

Can I hope, my friends, that, though I have talked so much all this while, you will take up the work of this man for yourselves and keep the green fire of his immortal spirit warm amongst you?

I have chatted to you long past my time, but you are of the patient ones, and have listened accordingly. I have crowded my canvas with figures, but I purposely did so, for here, and hereafter in the hours I spend with you, I am desirous not so much of criticising our literature as bringing you to a feast of good things.

I began this lecture with Keats. Let me end it with him, too:

Who alive can say

Thou art no Poet—may'st not tell thy dreams?
Since every man whose soul is not a clod
Hath visions, and would speak, if he had loved
And been well nurtured in his mother tongue.

REFERENCE BOOKS:—

At Dawn and Dusk, Victor J. Daley (Angus & Robertson).
Wine and Roses, Victor J. Daley (Angus & Robertson).
A Journalist and Two Bears, James Enmond (Sydney).
How He Died, John Farrell (Angus & Robertson).
Poetical Works, James Brunton Stephens (Angus & Robertson).
The Secret Key, George, Essex Evans (Angus & Robertson).
Collected Prose and Verse from *The Bulletin*.

QUINN.

Fishing the deep for stars, he gently drew
A net of silver fancies to the strand—
Soft notes that as they fluttered in his hand,
Made a low music such as old flutes blew
To quiet hearts when all the world was new
And simple men were near to understand.
He sang the dawning on the sea and land;
And ever there was honey in the dew.

Australia knew his singing for her own;
Not the full concert of her pipes and strings,
But the melodious movement that her trees
Make to grey wanderers in the bush alone
Old dreamers hearing strange imaginings
In every longing cadence of her breeze.

MARY GILMORE.

Fly out, O sparks, from anvils of rich song!
Mount to the stars and strike the heaven with lays
Clean-smitten from the forge of eager days,
And all the fire of Right that conquers wrong.
Now are the little voices made more strong,
And the pure note more pure with woman-praise
Of the true things, through all the dusty ways
Worn with the feet of Labour, dumb too long.

O woman of the homely hearth who sees
God as a shepherd counting His lone sheep
On the old hills of Man's forlorn desire!
Those hills have felt again the full, strong breeze
Where your great angels in the twilight keep
Vials of wrath and prophecies of fire.

RODERIC QUINN.

I am going to let Roderic Quinn open this lecture himself:—

You know how hard it is to talk about oneself, and I hope you will understand me when I say that, when I sit down to try and write something about my life, I see a wide, vague area of landscape dotted here and there by a few insignificant slopes and clumps of bush, but altogether lacking in mountains or forests. Still here goes for a few of the facts.

I was born in Surrey Hills so close to Woolloomooloo that I sometimes think I am entitled to claim Woolloomooloo (they call it East Sydney now) as my birthplace. I went to school to St. Francis, Haymarket, and later to St. Patrick's, Harrington Street—quite close to the present *Bulletin* office. After school I went into a produce merchant's office, and tried to understand the worth of the pumpkin and the potato. From this position I was fired for sending out an account to the firm's best customer for £80 instead of £8. He was a very determined customer, and very indignant, and had me fired at once. Then I went school-teaching in a provisional school, stood the unspeakable monotony for six months, rowed with the Department because they wanted to reduce my salary and left. Later I drifted into a nice Government position. It was so nice that others fixed greedy eyes on it, so that after eighteen months I was fired again. Since then I have always been writing—that's about all.

I guessed that, as teachers, you would appreciate those remarks. It seems only yesterday that I was one of you myself, grumbling about the same things that sent Roderic Quinn out to that last nice Government position.

From the tone of his letter to us, you would judge that, under his contemplative spirit, there is humour. I have not found it in any of his work, and when you meet him you discover him to be just the dreamy, quiet, gentle soul his poetry suggests.

His parents emigrated to Australia from Galway, Ireland, in 1855, and Roderic was born the sixth child of a family of nine, on November 26, 1869. When he was a boy at school, Daley had just reached Sydney. At Kendall's death, Quinn was still a school-boy, yet in 1899, when his first volume of verse appeared, he had carried Australian poetry a little nearer the ideal of real imagery, and given to our song a deeper soul. I say this knowing that "At Dawn and Dusk," by Victor Daley, appeared only a year before Quinn's "Hidden Tide," and the work of these two poets was appearing simultaneously in *The Bulletin*; but I am of firm opinion that there has been all along a continuous growth in the soul of Australian poetry, and that where Victor Daley stopped at imaginative romance and faerie, Roderic Quinn took up the lyre and sang into our poetry a new mysticism and a depth that often went right under the salt in human tears.

If now and again, during these lectures, I fall into the error of separating our singers from the happy band of English and American modern singers, you must remember that I am nearer our own, as you are, and that being our own, my love and reverence for them must go deeper.

Just here, I was tempted to say, that very few Australian lyrics please me as much as this one of Roderic Quinn's, called "Stars in the Sea," which begins:—

I took a boat on a starry night
And went for a row on the water.
And she danced like a child on a wake of light
And bowed where the ripples caught her.

I vowed as I rowed on the velvet blue.
Through the night and the starry splendour,
To woo and sue a maiden I knew
Till she bent to my pleadings tender.

Here, in a tender way, a quiet, still way—if stillness, except in the case of Alice Meynell's verses, may ever be said to sing—you have the keynote of Roderic Quinn's charm. His note is intensely lyrical, and he has gone on using this note with very little variation for nearly 30 years. He has been practically earning his living as a poet since 1890. Many sketches and stories, all finished and rounded off by his quiet pen, have appeared as well, and in 1897 a novel, "Mostyn Stayne," now almost forgotten, gave him some prominence as a prose writer. But it is as a poet we have always known him.

Neither "The Hidden Tide," which first saw print in 1899, nor "The Circling Hearths," published in 1901, contains in the mass such good work as Mr. Quinn has been giving us recently. Much of this work is to be found in "Poems," which appeared last year in Sydney. Yet in those early volumes, there were a couple of poems, "The Hidden Tide" and "The Camp Within the West," whose like Quinn has not found since in his soul. "The Hidden Tide" opened on a note entirely new at that time in Australian verse:—

Within the world a second world
That circles ceaselessly:
Stars in the sky and sister stars—
Turn in your eyes and see!

Tides of the sea that rise and fall.
Aheave from Pole to Pole—
And kindred swayings, veiled but felt.
That noise along the soul.

And ended on the same full tide of wonder:—

O, Toilers of the Hidden Seas!
Ye have strange gain and loss,
Dragging the Deeps of Soul for pearls,
And oft-times netting dross.

Fierce are the winds across your realm,
As though some Demon veiled
Had loosed the gates of Spirit-land
To ravage ways unsailed.

But still sweet hours befall at times,
Rich-lit and full of ease;
The after glow is like the light
Of sunset on tired seas.

And worse, perhaps, may be the lot
Of those whose fate is sleep,
The sodden souls without a tide,
Dense as a rotten deep.

Pain paves the way for keener joy,
And wondrous thoughts uproll
When the large moon of Peace looks down
On high tide in the Soul.

"The Camp Within the West" held mystery and breathless fear:—

O, did you see a troop go by
War-weary and oppressed,
Dead kisses on the drooping lip
And a dead heart in the breast?

*Yea, I have seen them one by one,
Way-weary and oppressed;
And when I asked them "Whither speed?"
They answered "To the West!"*

And did pain pierce their feet, as though
The way with thorns were set,
And were they visited by strange
Dark angels of regret?

*O, yea; and some were mute as death,
Though, shot by many a dart,
With them the salt of inward tears
Went stinging through the heart.*

If an anthology of miraculous lines of English verse were ever produced, those last two lines of Quinn's should most certainly be there. They call up other lines in Australasian verse that catch the breath. For instance, Arnold Wall's "lost breeze in the elms of Heaven."

I always think of Wordsworth's nun "breathless with adoration" when I read Wall's line.

Having mentioned "The Hidden Tide" and "The Camp Within the West," I must add that I doubt if either of those poems holds in its lines the new-born Australian emotion that cries through "The Sea Seekers," a much later poem.

I hope you agree with me in this, that Roderic Quinn's voice is in its way as Australian as Henry Lawson's. Some people, I know, will disagree. I believe Victor Daley would, were he here, because in his note of appreciation on John Farrell at the latter's death in 1904, the same year that Quinn's "The Hidden Tide" and "The Camp Within the West" were republished in "A Southern Garland," Daley remarks that Farrell liked to hear "Roderic Quinn and others sing very sorrowfully about nightingales in Greece."

Brother poets have often been the best judges of one another's work. Elizabeth Barrett Browning was of Browning's. But, on the other hand, they have often been the worst, as in the case of

Byron and Keats. If this was Daley's idea of Quinn, he must have entirely missed all of the latter's work.

It is of a very real world, real things, and almost always Australian things, Roderic Quinn sings and writes. A critic said of this poet quite recently, "Oh, Quinn! Quinn isn't what he used to be! When I knew him first he had the vision. Now he has lost it. He just goes on repeating his themes."

"What are they?" I asked.

"Just the same things in the same old way."

"Yes," I sighed, "spring and love, stars and roses, nature—poor old nature!—roads, tracks, the sea—the poor, poor, old sea!—men and women—the old things—the same old things."

Now let us take a cursory glance at the present volume of Quinn's work and see just where this repetition of old themes begins and ends.

You are going to tell me that the test is not fair, and that this volume I hold is a carefully selected collection of Quinn's work. I have to grant you that. But turn to the poems.

Here is old Spring born again:—

Sing out and be happy!

The Spring is at hand.

The grass green and sappy

The trees of the land.

Sing! for the breeze is

Rustling and silky,

And toys with and teases

Long blossoms and milky.

If any care rankles—

Away! and behold

Pink feet and white ankles

On beaches of gold,

And surf that runs after

To kiss clinging dresses.

And white teeth and laughter,

And wild clinging tresses!

But is this Spring?

They marshalled her lovers four and four,

A drum at their heads, in the days of old:

O, none could have guessed their hearts were sore:

They marched with such gayness in scarlet and gold.

They came to the dance place on the hill

Where Death was the piper (he pipes full well);

They grounded their arms and stood stock still;

And just why he sorrowed no one could tell.

O, some had been wed in distant lands.

And sweethearts had others—but let that pass;

She held them at ease in snow-white hands,

For Queen over all was the Currency Lass.

No. You are back in the early days. Let us go further:—
All the heights of the high shores gleam
Red and gold at the sunset hour;
There comes the spell of a magic dream,
And the Harbour seems a lotus-flower.

The spirit spelled by the Lotus swoons,
Its beauty summons the artist mood;
And thus, perchance, in a thousand moons
Its spell shall work in our waiting blood.

Then souls shall shine with an old-time grace,
And sense be wrapped in a golden trance,
And Art be crowned in the market-place
With Love and Beauty and fair Romance.

That is a little of "The Lotus Flower," a song born of Sydney Harbour.

What of "Acushla"?—

I named her twice, I named her thrice,
I named her ten times over;
The wind heard, and the singing bird,
And the bee in the creamy clover.

Acushla! Acushla!
The cushat dove is cooing;
It's little that a man may do,
Whose heart is hot with wooing.

"The House of the Commonwealth"?—

The love that ivy-like an ancient land doth cherish,
It grows not in a day, nor in a year doth perish.
But, little leaf by leaf,
It creeps along the walls and wreathes the ramparts hoary.
The sun that gives it strength, it is a nation's glory;
The dew, a people's grief.

The love that ivy-like around a home-land lingers,
With soft embrace of breast and green, caressive fingers,
We are too young to know.
Not ours the glory-domes, the monuments and arches
At thought of which the blood takes arms, and proudly marches
Exultant o'er the foe.

Green lands undesolated
For no avengement cry:
No feud of race unsated
Leaps out again to triumph,
Leaps out again to triumph,
Leaps out again to triumph, or to die!

That is a very small extract from Quinn's noble ode.

And here is a verse from one of my favourite pieces, called
"The Counsellors":—

Song and jest I gathered
Strolling up and down,
Talk o' the tavern
And gossip of the town;
Storing in my wallet,
Careless of the throng.

Coin of golden fancy,
 Coin of silver song,
 Gems of jovial friendship,
 Keepsakes manifold,
 Pearls that never gem-smith
 Set in filmy gold.
 Wealth's a witch that loses half her lure.
 When the blood runs red, and the pulse beats strong,

Well. What is your verdict? Not so very much repetition of theme, but a certain sameness of expression, you think—a quiet level kept that makes you long for a riotous roar of song from some singer less tender, less true to song's traditions of contemplative beauty and peace.

Suppose we leave Quinn for a time, then, and listen to some of the other singers, who were piping happy, sunny reeds side by side with Roderic Quinn—perhaps not always happy, nor always sunny reeds. Often, as in the case of Arthur H. Adams, reeds singing with the triumphant note of new faiths, new dawns, new desires.

In this New Zealand singer, who was born at Lawrence, once the famous Gabriel's Gully of the early gold discoveries, on the 6th June, 1872, was the same spirit of proud adventure and gallant daring that characterised the New Zealand soldier wherever he went during the recent war. In him more than twenty years before the mistake of Gallipoli, young New Zealand, with a vision as fresh as the waters of Rakaia, set underfoot the old notion and ideas.

Is there not fire in this fine challenge?

Here, aloof I take my stand—

Alien, iconoclast—

Poet of a newer land,

Confident, aggressive, lonely,

Product of the present only,

Thinking nothing of the past.

All the beauty that has been,

All of wisdom's overplus,

Has been given me to glean;

In Earth's story clear one page is—

This—the widest of the ages—

Virile, vast, tumultuous.

I shall croon no love-song old,

Dream no memory of wrong,

Build no mighty epic bold:

From my forge I send them flying—

Fragments glowing once and dying—

Scattered sparks of molten song.

And what a warm patriotism there is in "Written in Australia":—

The wide sun stares without a cloud;

Whipped by his glances trident

The earth lies quivering and cowed!

My heart is hot with discontent—

I hate this haggard continent.

*But over the loping leagues of sea
A lone hand calls to her children free;
My own land holding her arms to me
Over the loping leagues of sea.*

The land lies desolate and stripped;
Across its waste has thinly strayed
A tattered host of eucalypt,
From whose gaunt uniform is made
A ragged penury of shade.

But o'er my isles the forests drew
A mantle thick—save where a peak
Shows his grim teeth a-suarl—and through
The filtered coolness creek and creek,
Tangled in ferns, in whispers speak.

And there the placid great lakes are,
And brimming rivers proudly force
Their ice-cold tides. Here, like a scar,
Dry-lipped, a withered watercourse
Crawls from a long-forgotten source.

There is a heart-felt song in this too:—

Maoriland, my mother!
Holds the earth so fair another?
O, my land of the moa and Maori,
Garlanded grand with your forests of kauri,
Lone you stand, only beauty your dowry,
Maoriland, my mother!"

"Maoriland, and Other Verses," from which book I have taken these extracts, appeared in the same year as Quinn's "The Hidden Tide." In 1902 Adams published "The Nazarene" in London. I like the prelude to this poem as well as anything Adams ever wrote.

* A portion of it runs:—

The sweet familiar Nazarene is lost
Beneath the waving of fine priestly hands;
His tender, troubled face looks dimly out
Across the incense-smoke: I cannot hear
His quiet tones beneath the breathless throb
Of vast, sonorous organs; and the bruised
And wounded body we would weep upon
Is covered from our pitying gaze with stiff
And costly vestments; he is buried deep
In piles of carven stone, and lies forgotten
Beneath the triumph of cloud-questing spires.

and it ends:—

O, that the world might know him as he was—
One of our human family, Mary's Son!

Mr. Adams, during later years, has turned his attention from poetry to prose and play-writing. His novels maintain a high standard of cleverness, and, in "Galahad Jones," he had and used with skill, a new motive of suburban romance. Most of his plays turn upon dialogue rather than situation for their effect. I have

heard the playwright say that dialogue must lead to situation in play-writing; but he does not always practice this himself. Anyway, is it true? Often a situation that needs a whole lot of talking to explain afterwards may be reached without any dialogue whatever. Nevertheless, "Mrs. Pretty and the Premier," an amusing comedy, was produced a few years ago in England with success. I never can understand why Marie Tempest did not play it here.

In Bernard O'Dowd, born at Beauford, Victoria, six years before Adams, we meet a different singer. His first book, "Dawnward," was published in 1903, and, in a fine sonnet, he questioned Australia's place. Having addressed her as: "Last sea-thing dredged by sailor Time from space," he goes on to ask her what she is; and the sextette ends:—

The cenotaphs of species dead elsewhere
That in your limits leap and swim and fly.
Or trail uncanny harp-strings from your trees.
Mix omens with the auguries that dare
To plant the Cross upon your forehead sky.
A virgin helpmate Ocean at your knees.

Then he asked in strange words where she was going.

He was moved sincerely. He had under everything, as the foreword to his book says, "the dear Love of Comrades." But mark the capitals! If I may say so to you as students, I like this poet's work best when he comes down from Doubt with a capital "D," and "Need," with a large "N," from "the viaducts of Near and Far," "young Innovation's head," and "Pasts' Procrustes-bed," and just sings because he has a song.

Here is a sample of O'Dowd:—

Will "Sport" educe a virile pith.
Our pulses teach to throb?
Or weary earth re-saddle with
A Nika-riot mob?
Will centre-seeking "Culture" hold
Tangential Passion's bolt?
Yield orbits of an Age of Gold.
Or comets of Revolt?

I am for "comets of Revolt" all the time when it comes to verse such as this is. Buried away behind the words there is live thought, I believe, somewhere, but why treat it as if it did not matter?

It is such a crying pity. Thought is a sacred thing. It is the religion of our daily lives. O'Dowd has published other volumes. "The Seven Deadly Sins, and Other Verses" and "Poems" were both published in Melbourne, the first in 1909, the second, 1910.

Another writer who came to Australia from Scotland in 1889 was William Henry Ogilvie. His "Fair Girls and Gray Horses," published in 1898, contains what its title suggests. I like the



horses better than the girls generally, though I prefer Ogilvie's ballads and one or two little tender poems to either.

Ogilvie is a Scotchman who visited Australia, caught the atmosphere of her cattle and horses, sniffed her good air and sunshine, and began to write in a Scottish way about her. Though he has found a big public here, and no eisteddfod competition is complete without some of his poems, though he publishes his books in Australia, he was born in Scotland, and I think belongs, after all, to that country where he now lives.

There were other men writing simultaneously with Roderic Quinn. Arthur Bayldon, whose name I have mentioned to you before, published a book quite recently, containing the best poems he had written during this period and earlier. His best known and, incidentally, his best poem, is a magnificent sonnet on "Marlowe."

The octave has the rush of Elizabethan adventure in it:—

With Eastern banners flaunting in the breeze
Royal processions, sounding fife and gong
And showering jewels on the jostling throng.
March to the tramp of Marlowe's harmonies.
He drained life's brimming goblet to the lees.
He recked not that a peer superb and strong
Would tune great notes to his impassioned song
And top his cannonading lines with ease.

This mention of Elizabethan adventure reminds me that J. le Gay Brereton, our finest Elizabethan scholar, was producing verses remarkable for their delicate tenderness side by side with Roderic Quinn.

Though "Sea and Sky," the volume which contains his finest verse, did not appear until 1908, he had published a good deal before it. He is, as a poet, in love with all open-air things. He has put feeling into leaves, and passion, now and again, into trees.

This verse from his exquisite little lyric, "The Pine," lingers in my mind:—

A secret spot my soul has found
Where naked she may stand,
And bathe her in the sea of sound
That rings the quiet land.

In "Wanderers," he expresses himself and his song:—

I, who am son of a star
And brother of birds and of trees,
Have wandered fire-driven afar
Through forests and under the seas.

These lines to his son, "Wilfred," show the poet at his best:—

What of these tender feet
That have never toddled yet?
What dances shall they beat,
With what red vintage wet?
In what wild way will they march or stray,
By what sly paynims met?

The toil of it none may share;
 By yourself must the way be won
 Through fervid or frozen air
 Till the overland journey's done;
 And I would not take for your own dear sake,
 one thorn from your track, my son.

 Go forth to your hill and dale,
 Yet take in your hand from me
 A staff when your footsteps fail,
 A weapon if need there be;
 'Twill hum in your ear when the foeman's near,
 athirst for the victory.

 To your freeborn soul be true—
 Fling parchment in the fire;
 Men's laws are null for you,
 For a word of Love is higher.
 And can you do aught, when He rules your thought,
 but follow your own desire?

In an interesting account of his life, he tells of his schooling at the Sydney Grammar School and the University, where he is now Professor of English Literature, and adds:—

At school and at the University, by the way, I won several prizes for English verse. My first book of verse, "The Song of Brotherhood," was written almost entirely in my undergraduate days—and is what you'd expect. In the Long Vacation of 1893-94, I went tramping—humping bluey—with Dowell O'Reilly across Tasmania, and so got the taste for the open road which still asserts itself every spring-time. Hence "Landlopers."

Early in 1894 I met Henry Lawson at a lodging-house run by Mary Gilmore (then M. J. Cameron) and Mrs. William Lane, and for some time was a close associate of his.

Lawson has addressed one of his best short pieces to J. le Gay Brereton. But I read you that extract because it introduces to us the name of the most striking woman-writer in Australia—Mary Gilmore. She was born in 1865, the daughter of Donal Cameron, a Highlander; and, it is noticeable that Jessie Mackay, New Zealand's strong singer, was born just a year before her. These two women were both school-teachers before they began to devote their time to journalism. Jessie Mackay developed much quicker than Mary Gilmore, for, as early as 1889, the former had begun to publish her verses. She has not the woman-message of Mary Gilmore's best work, but there is the mournful music of the bag-pipes in this, her finest effort:—

They played him home to the House of Stones,
 All the way, all the way.
 To his grave in the sound of the winter sea:
 The sky was dour, the sky was gray.
 They played him home with the chieftain's dirge,
 Till the wail was wed to the rolling surge,
 They played him home with a sorrowful will
 To his grave at the foot of the Holy Hill
 And the pipes went mourning all the way.

That was written in 1901. Despite Blanche Edith Baughan, an English poetess, who came to reside in New Zealand just a year before, New Zealand knows no finer singer than Jessie Mackay. It is noticeable that in the year in which she wrote that funeral ode, "The Burial of Sir John Mackenzie," Louise Mack published "Dreams in Flower" in Sydney. There is nothing very distinguished about the latter volume.

So far, in Australia, it is in the realm of fiction that women writers have succeeded. In the mass, their efforts in this field can be creditably linked with the output of the men. Not so in verse. Though a considerable number of women persistently sing, the thought and passion and feeling behind the song are not very intense. Mary Gilmore stands on a lonely peak, far, far from the majority, because the hot sparks of a real woman's song are behind her. She is lost when it comes to turning honey and dew, roses and myrrh and painted canoes and castles into verse. The vigorous Queensland singer of all things under the sun, M. Forrest, leaves her and all Australian women, and a great many of the men, far in the rear when good verses on any given subject worth a fancy, are required. But she never challenges Mary Gilmore's lone height, because, with all the latter's faults, even in her very incoherence, she is so truly and deeply a woman. M. Forrest has a man's outlook. Mary Gilmore can only be a woman. In "The Passionate Heart," recently published, the soul of a woman cries through the pages. The voice is untamed, the utterance sometimes choked, but it is a woman's voice all the time. She tries to express it in:—

O, Life, I called to thee:
What answer mad'st thou me?
—Only a mocking word
Across the darkness heard.

I held mine hands to thee:
What gav'st thou to me?
—Only a broken thing:
A harp without a string.

I do not want you to forget the passionate voice of Marie Pitt, because I have not yet mentioned her. She wrote her first verse to the *Bulletin* in 1900. Like Mary Gilmore, she has been a Labour agitator and a believer in the people. A more careful craftswoman than Mary Gilmore, magic has sometimes danced into her lines, and, the volume she is now collecting, should take its place among the best work Victoria has produced.

I like the faculty in her song, and, when I read it, I like to think that she is a working woman, who has sung these songs of dew on night-stocks, pixies and elves and love, above the woman cares of daily household drudgery and monotony. She never quite gets the strangely earth-removed note of Lala Fisher, nor the primitive one of Dulcie Deamer, and she has not the sense of humour of Ethel Turner and Mary E. Lloyd, but she has the passion.

I have been carried away again by this long interpolation : but these women were all singing and thinking in unison with the chief subject of my lecture. So was another important man, whom I have mentioned before, Chris. Brennan. He was educated at the St. Ignatius College, Riverview, where he read "Paradise Lost" under the desk for its story interest, and learned to appreciate Milton. Later he found Cowper. On entering the Sydney University, he distinguished himself by winning, amongst other prizes, the James King of Irrawang Travelling Scholarship, which took him to Berlin. He studied classics and philosophy, but his chief interest at that time was modern French poetry, and it was then that he began to revere the French symbolist, Mallarmé, on the elucidation of whose work he is now an admitted authority. When he returned to Sydney, in 1895, he received an appointment in the Public Library, and, afterwards at the University, where he is now Associate Professor of German and Modern Literature.

Brennan's work is full of beauty. Rapture is held in line after line, and a careful study of his writing would be of great value to you as teachers. His collected "Poems" are almost as good a companion as a volume of Keats. Brennan is soaked in Keats, in Milton, and possibly French poets of whose existence we Australians know so little. The poet does not write very much now : but, for sheer beauty of phrase, and the infinite pity of words that almost makes you cry out, I cannot think of anything he wrote better than this :

. . . not here . . . in some long-gone world . . .

close-lock'd in that passionate arm-clasp
no word did we utter, we stirr'd not :
the silence of Death, or of Love . . .
only, round and over us
that tearless infinite yearning
and the Night with her spread wings rustling
folding us with the stars.

. . . not here . . . in some long-gone kingdom
of old, on her terrace at evening
O, folded close to her heart !

I do not know why a Professor of Modern Languages leaves out his capital letters when he is writing English verse ; but, then, neither do I know, why conventional printer's laws should not be broken. Brennan does not break the laws of poetry. No matter where you open his book, the beautiful lure of words is there. He has said it himself :—

the wildwood of adventurous thought
and lands of dawn my dream had won.

Roderic Quinn's brother, Patrick, was another verse-maker turning the tuneful rhyme at this same time, so also was Dowell O'Reilly, a more important singer, whose fine, quiet music often touches the deeps of sound.

A Sydney University man, O'Reilly began to publish in 1884. His prose has the same finished quality as his verse. "Tears and Triumph" is a delicate and touching story and in its originality, unique. "Five Corners," a recent collection of short stories, is in places graphically and exquisitely done.

These words of his on "An Autumn Day" describe his own song:—

A twittering dream of melody new-born,
Rare love-notes fluting in the lucent grey,
A wilderness of song when sunbeams play,
And tremulous drops the gossamer adorn.

Shaw Neilson, a dreamer seven years younger than O'Reilly, was beginning to hear the lyric of his own pen in these days. His volume, "Heart o' Spring," published last year, suggests singing thistledown, and, now and again, rhythmic light and passing air for a moment on fire.

James Hebblethwaite, wistful and scholarly, Sydney Jephcott, Hubert Church, and many others, were contributing verses regularly to Australian newspapers during this period.

But of all this band of singers only Roderic Quinn has continued to sing with striking regularity in our midst. His work has all the charm of his Celtic spirit. He is an idealist feeling always for the beautiful. His range is not world-wide. His visions end on near horizons, but he has told us himself what his life has been. His work depicts that life. There have been no great shadows with which his soul has wrestled for light. Adversity has touched him with a gentle hand, failing to rob him of his pure passion for the beautiful. I cannot find any poem in his work which tells of any life-trial he himself has experienced, but I can find many lines which make my very blood smart with a strange feeling that lives just beneath the skin, and is none the less keen for that.

Quinn writes regularly for *The Bulletin*, and, in *The Worker*, at present edited by the daring-penned H. E. Boote, he, week by week, melodiously sings, sometimes thinly, but always sweetly. You will not take up Roderic Quinn's present volume of "Poems" without pleasure. If you listen you will hear the breeze at dusk, the song of a bird on a distant bush, the lap of the waves on a shelly beach through every leaf: and you will not close the volume again without feeling that the very taste of the song is with you—the sweetness of the quondongs, the bitterness of leaves, and the grey saltiness of the old sea.

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WRIGHT.

There was a boy in Ireland who for years
 Dreamed of the fairy-folk and playing found
 Knights of romance in many a mossy mound
Made green by torrents of a nation's tears.
Out of the raths with their tall shining spears
 Queens and white heroes down the whispering ground
 Shook the bright splendour of their visions round.
Pregnant with promise that a child still hears.

The child in the grown man. The new-old dreams
 In a new land have stirred his soul to sing.
 Ah! dipped in fire his lyric pen can spill
Fancies as swift as his own country's streams
 Here where a thousand flights of song take wing
 Urging the magic of his master-will.

DAVID McKEE WRIGHT.

This lecture must begin in Ireland, for, though the singer about whose work and life I am now going to talk to you, has been in Australasia for over thirty years, and, though he has written all of his best work here, his finest thoughts and dreams and songs go home to the heart of that singing green isle where he was born as surely as birds go home to their nests.

Most songs that have uplifted the human heart and given the human soul wings of unconquerable courage, have come, of late years, out of Ireland. Always she has been the mother of Laughter to the English-speaking world, because Laughter is mother to the children of Sorrow.

In the writings, both the prose and poetry of this Celtic singer—David McKee Wright—Laughter and Sorrow live under the same roof-thatch of his song-cabin. His influence on our literature has lifted it into a definite place in the Celtic renaissance, which, as yet, has barely begun. He is, so far, the truest Celt who has sung amongst us, and nearly all Australian writers are Celtic in thought, spirit and feeling. Most of their dreams were born a hundred or two hundred or seven hundred years ago in Ireland, and a few of them in the Scottish Highlands. The singer has expressed it in this way:—

In Australia there are fine children playing
And one child in three has Irish eyes.

The Irish eyes of David McKee Wright first saw the good light of day in a farm-house in County Down. There, as a child, he played amongst the raths and fairy mounds of green romance and was a very-much loved little boy, as his mother had been a daughter of the Rev. David McKee, known throughout all that

district as a remarkable preacher and a pioneer of higher education. It was to that old clergyman in the house where the poet was born, that Hugh Bronte first brought Charlotte's "Jane Eyre," and the scene is picturesquely described by the poet's father in his book, "The Brontes in Ireland." Dr. William Wright was a notable scholar of Oriental languages who published other books as well as that on the Brontes.

It is a remarkable coincidence that when Wright was listening to the old people tell of battle done in other days in his grandmother's kitchen at Ballynaskeagh, twenty miles away Victor Daley was hearing from his grandfather's lips of the days when the Daleys were princes in the land. In the year that Daley left Ireland for London (1872), Wright began to walk through the meadows and up the hill to the little Glascar School. Wright left Ireland at the age of seven, and was a small boy at Pope's School, Upper Norwood, London, when Daley reached Australia, scattering broadcast the first seeds of Celticism.

The soil had been dug by Henry Kendall some years before. In 1887 Wright arrived in New Zealand, and remained there until 1909, publishing several small books of verse, none of which matter very much in the mass of work he has done since. In 1909 he came to Sydney, and at once became prominent among the writing men about him. In that year a unique volume of verse had been published by a young writer, whose soul beat neither to Australia's nor Ireland's, nor yet quite Scotland's music, though his father, George Gordon McCrae, had been born in Scotland in 1832. The volume was entitled, "Silvarum Libri," reprinted as "Satyrs and Sunlight," and was written by Hugh McCrae, a Victorian, born at Hawthorn on October 4th, 1876, educated at the Hawthorn Grammar School and articled to a firm of Melbourne solicitors, only to abandon firm and articles for poetry. McCrae's muse is a muse of his own creation. I cannot tell you where she has her dwelling, under what starry sky, beside what silver stream. Perhaps, if you could gather up a little piece of Greece and set it in the wild Highlands of Scotland, you would have the real McCrae. Never mind the muse. Her business is to sing and mix words magically into a potion of passion. Wherever her home, whatever her haunt, this is her essential work. That McCrae's muse does these things you may judge from a few extracts:—

She looked on me with sadder eyes than Death,
And moving thro' the large autumnal trees,
Failed like a phantom on the bitter breath
Of midnight: and the unillumined seas
Roared in the darkness out of centuries.

I seek her in the labyrinthine maze
Of stars unravelling their golden chain.
And, from my cavern, mark the lightning blaze
A pathway for her down the singing rain . . .
In vain, in vain: She cannot come again.

This verse in its way gives the pure sensuous joy that dwells only in the lyric life of beautiful words:—

There was no sound (such reverie
Possessed that thoughtful nook) . . .
The music of a moving tree
Which rose beside the brook
And drank its water . . . That alone—
Like some great sonnet read,
Hush'd to a whisper—made a tone
Of gold on silver thread.

Again these words of comfort to his mother have the sorrow of pity under their letters:—

Let the tears flow . . . far better so
Than that the heart might break
He loved, we know.
Dear, for your own sweet sake
This comfort take:
Come th plenty after a dearth,
Sun after rain,
Surely he'll meet you, somewhere, again.
Whether on earth
Or in the villages of Heaven,
Whose cottage-lights are dim
To us, below our swaying seven
Green-crested elm-boles . . .

There are plenty of word pictures in his work as well. He is an artist by occupation to-day, and his poetry output seems to grow smaller every year. His last published volume, "Columbine," has not the forest-freshness of his early work, but the morning dew is sweet on several pieces. There is little in common between the poems of Wright and McCrae. When Wright touches Greece, as he often does, it is the Greece of Athens at her best we meet.

You hear it in lines like these:—

The wonder tale that Hellas told
This hour is mine:
The moony mountains lit with gold.
The seas of wine,
The large gods floating wingless down the world,
The incense from dim woodland altars curled,
The temples white.
The magic of the briny-scented day
Chasing the night,
And all the young Aegæan winds at play
Piping delight.

Under a number of pen-names, some of which are Pat O'Maori, Mary McCommonwealth, Curse o' Moses, and George Street, Wright has delighted and amused an increasing number of readers.

I might take these names in turn, and show you the joyous abandon of O'Maori's ballads, the nonsense-note in Mary Mc., the pointed topical verse of C.O.M., and the fine rhetorical poetry of

George Street, but I prefer to devote what time I have to the signed work of the poet, for in that we shall find his best, and it is only the finest work of our writers in which I am interested here. Shall we hear his own account of himself, which he has sent us, before we go to "An Irish Heart," published in 1918 in Sydney, not for the best work he has done, but the best so far in book-form? It is rather a tragedy that in Australia our poets are all journalists more or less when they are not pedagogues.

Here is Wright's story:—

My great distinction, and that which specially qualifies me to write of simple themes, is that I was born under thatch—brown Irish straw thatch with sally reeds for binding and deep green moss on the weather side. The new house at Ballynaskeagh was being built; my grandfather, David McKee, had just died at the age of 92; and my mother and father were home on furlough from Syria. I was left as a squawling and delicate infant in the care of my grandmother and aunt to get strong breathing Irish air while my parents returned to Damascus. Up to the age of seven I roamed about the fields of County Down—the very district where still the Orange drum beats loudest, yet which, in spite of the noise, elects De Valera to the Ulster Parliament. I loved every tree about my old home, every turn of the green roads, every cadence of the people's voices. They were all my friends—the farmers, the cotters, the very old men who talked of the battle of Ballynahinch as a familiar memory of childhood, the beggarmen sitting eating bowls of stir-about or broth in the big Ballynaskeagh kitchen, the people under orange banners and those who wore green sashes. On the day after my seventh birthday I was suddenly uprooted and transplanted to London. In ten or more years spent in England I doubt if I ever took root. My school-days in Upper Norwood were cheerful enough; I have recollections of very long bright summers in a land of utter loveliness, and splendid holidays by the English Channel and the North Sea; but the outstanding features of my life in England were my two visits to Ireland. I was still a boy when I came to Australia and passed on from Sydney to New Zealand. It was about 1890 that I began to pour out stories and verses in great quantity. There was a lot of enthusiasm behind the effort, but the skill seldom kept pace with the ambition. I was then working on an Otago station; and in the high mountain air I read much that was best in literature with a thoroughness of appreciation that I sometimes look back to with wonder. In the year of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee I was in Dunedin taking classes at the Otago University, and discovering that in all except English I was a dunce among younger men fresh from school. In 1896, 1897, and 1900 I published small volumes of verse which got a better hearing than they deserved; but it was not until I returned to Australia, in 1910, that my real work began. That is about all the story that is worth telling. Whatever quality there is in my writing is of late development. England and New Zealand play a small part in my making—if there is any sense in which I can be said to be made. In Australia the ground seemed to become firm under my feet, and the whole early Irish impulse returned—the rest was only discipline and experimental campaigning.

Wright did not mention to us that he won the first Otago University prize given for a poem far back in his New Zealand days, nor that last year the only prizes offered for poems in Australia fell to him—a poem welcoming the Prince of Wales, and

the Rupert Brooke Memorial Prize for a poem on "Gallipoli." Both the sonnet and short epic with which Wright won the respective prizes are in their manner striking. The latter is our first attempt at an epic in Australian verse, and marches and moves to the ring of a trumpet. It is, so far, the noblest memorial our Anzacs have had. For a man who was not actually at Gallipoli the colour is remarkably true. One of the longest poems written by an Australian, it is also one of the most ambitious. Soaked in the history of that historic spot, thrilled with the deed of the gallant adventure, the task, colossal as it seems to us, was probably a simple one for the poet. I believe that of all our singers and writers, this man has the most definite message, not only for Australia, but for man. I do not mean by that that the other people I have mentioned to you have not had their messages of love and beauty, colour, peace and joy; but none of them has so ardently taken up the standard of humanity and in forceful prose and verse repeatedly championed the things that have made life worth while, lifting it above the bread and butter level into a place of future hope.

I observe every now and then in my words to you that my feminine fluency—you may term it gush—carries me into that odious realm of superlatives I so dislike. But let me impress upon you again that the standard of my judgment here is our own literature—the literature which is as important to you as *Beowulf* and *Piers Plowman* and "The Knight's Tale" and "Hamlet"—more important to you, for that which your mouth has uttered shows what is in your heart and soul. And the heart and the soul of a nation can only be found in its literature. Do remember that, when I choose to soar above the tree-tops of appreciation rather than sink myself in the shallows of censure, my desire is to impart my admiration and my love of my land and its letters to you, as moulders of the future minds of Australia. And if you lead your children to the door of our literature, and without robbing them of their own right to select what they like for reasons which appeal to them, turn the key of Romance for them, these hours I have given you will bear fruit.

I was saying that Wright had a message, and a great one. I shall take one of the fairest things, I think, that has been written here, called "Mothers of Men"—a quite recent work, which has the deep hope of kinder days for Man, when a nobler understanding of women will lift the race.

It opens:—

*Out of Bethlehem and Balmain—
Fill the pipe with sweeter breath!
Sydney calls to Nazareth:
And the King, the King shall reign!
We have fought with Doom and Death
And the glory comes again!*

*Mary, Mother of Sons,
 Ere, Mother of All!
 How the praise runs
 From garden to stall!
 By the old stars above
 Ye have borne us for love—
 Christ and Cain,
 Of your pain
 Lo, the faith that withstood
 All of ill that might fall!
 Lo, the smiles that ye wore
 In your great motherhood
 We bend and adore!
 O ye holiest ones,
 Ere, Mother of All!
 Mary, Mother of Sons!*

We march with the plough and the loom
 Over broad hills to the sea,
 Where the great waves blanch and boom,
 Shouting of things to be.

With hoisting of white sails
 We follow a good star
 Till a fair dawn pales
 On new hills and far.

And the march of the plough and the loom
 Ever begins anew
 With a strange flower in bloom
 And an old thing to do.

Always our hearts are strong
 By plain and valley and glen;
 For we have the marching song—
 The song of the Mothers of men.

*Be sure the wonder of her face
 Across the loneliest land would call;
 And with her tears in that far place
 She cleansed us all, she cleansed us all.*

The poem sings on of the mothers who fight and die in their
 sons, and ends:—

When the breeze comes crisper
 Listen, listen then!
 "Here lies," it seems to whisper,
 "A mother of men."

And the men she bore are sleeping
 Far and far away—
 Oh, earth is wide for weeping
 From here to Suvla Bay!

*Be sure she spoke the quiet word
 That made them strong and very wise,
 When, valour flaming like a sword,
 They looked at death with mocking eyes.*

O, Mary, Eve and mother mine,
 The world is crying at the door;
 And he would quaff of deeds as wine,
 The little child you loved and bore.

Not straight his path nor strong his arm,
 But something in his blood will leap,
 And something save his soul from harm
 Because you sang him once to sleep.

And there are bugles blowing shrill
 And voices calling like the sea
 Because the world in heart and will
 Draws nearer mother-victory.

For this shall be the final tryst
 Of Truth and Love on earth's green sod,
 When every Mary bears a Christ
 And every Christ is Man-in-God.

*Out of Bethlehem and Balmain—
 Fill the pipe with sweeter breath!—
 Sydney calls to Nazareth;
 And the Queen, the Queen shall reign!
 She has vanquished Doom and Death
 And her glory shall remain!*

I know of no more touching tribute that has been paid to woman by a man. And the astounding thing about it is, that this poem glorifying women, was published in *The Bulletin*, whose predominant note, both in prose and verse, is a man's note.

I have quoted the lyric almost in its entirety, and now I want you to consider its method. No one else here uses quite such a free-verse method as Wright. I find much of this form in old Irish material, but there it lacks the finish given to it by a pen whose owner thinks in verse. This poem does not obey the strict laws of Popeian prosody. The time is too short in this lecture to go into the question of English rhythm. We have, in reality, three kinds—classic scansion by quantity, which has often been attempted but rarely achieved; scansion by accent, which is most perfectly seen in the works of Pope and his contemporaries; and scansion by stress, which, although in its modern form it is to be directly traced to the Irish, runs behind scansion by accent through the whole of English literature.

Wright uses all three methods. There is an occasional line, as in "Hellas," where the scansion is undoubtedly by quantity. Many of his poems scan accurately from first to last by accent, but his most characteristic work follows the modern Irish method of scansion by stress or beat. "Mothers of Men" mixes all three.

We have seen an example of the first in "Hellas." Here is a sample of the second in "A Song of Little Gardens":—

There's a hum of quiet music in the deepening of the twilight,
 Like far bells in distant valleys heard through hush of murmurous trees,
 Or the elfin chant that haunts us when the thin moon casts a shy light
 Down a happy wind-tossed mountain with a cornfield at its knees,
 'Tis the song of little gardens, 'tis the song of quiet labour,
 Of the purple grapes in cluster and the rose upon the wall,
 Of the blue smoke climbing skyward and the kindly-nodding neighbour,
 And the moist, warm earth upbreathing its brown benison for all.

And this from "Dark Rosaleen" scans by the third method:—

And there's a happy fiddle
 That splits leafy June
 Clean through the middle
 With a quick fine tune;
 And when the summer's broken
 For all the world to see,
 Words shall be spoken
 Under bush and tree
 As clear as water lying
 In old stone wells—
 For words have wings for flying
 And tongues like bells—
 And we'll have done with seeming,
 And find what old years knew,
 That days are only dreaming
 And fairy nights are true.

The song that follows this, by the way, is unique in that it sings without obeying any of these rules:—

God made His world green
 And a fool with a knife made it red.
 I stand with my Dark Rosaleen
 Counting the graves of our dead;
 But the children go by—
 White, shining children with a green banner above them—
 Pointing faith to a clean sky
 In a world made to love them.

I have wandered from the subject of Wright's message to his skill as a craftsman in which he is unrivalled anywhere. I fancy you are saying, is there no fault in this man's work? Strangely enough, a fellow-poet of his once said to me: "The only thing that is wrong with Wright's 'An Irish Heart' is that there is nothing wrong. I don't know what to say about it except that it is too right. I can't find a fault." Well, I am not looking for the faults in any of our writers, but I sometimes find this poet's pet words come up too frequently. That is all. For the rest, I will have most of his work, which lends itself not very well to quotation, before much that has been written in louder, shriller keys.

His work is essentially to be read aloud—the test of all verse. Very noticeable is this in his ballads—a form of verse in which he is at home, as in "The Vision of Ethney." Ethney was a Danaan goddess who lost her Veil of Invisibility and became a mortal woman. The ballad begins:—

With arrow-flights of sunlit rain
Young April pattered on the pane,
When God had drawn His glory-bow
Across the darkened vale below,
And, flashing gems, the leaves were seen
A-drip upon the glowing green.

About the chapel on the hill
The sweet, wet place was very still,
Save for half-songs the birds would sing
Dipping a swift and shining wing,
And some soft murmur on the air
That told of pious folk at prayer.

The ballad I like best is "The Beggar's Bowl," in "An Irish Heart." But there are many which tell a delicate story in a delicate way. I have mentioned "An Irish Heart" several times. It was published in Sydney, 1918, and represents the poet's best work in certain moods. Half a dozen volumes just as good could be published by this poet from work he has done. The lyrics at the end called "Dark Rosaleen" and "Pen of Mine," "Haunted Memory," "The Robin," are a few of my favourites.

"Pen of Mine" seems to me to be ink on the wing. The swing of fire is in the airy melody:—

Pen of mine, pen of mine,
I will give you ink for wine
And white paper for your play
All a merry, windy day,
When pond waters come lip-lapping
On the grass,
And the laughing leaves are tapping
On the window as they pass,
I will give you ink for wine
Till you dream a fancy fine,
Pen of mine, pen of mine!

These stanzas from "Morn's Desire" I love:—

The Young Wind draws a fiddle-bow
Over mountain, and sun, and sea;
But the voice of my Love is kind and low
With a bridal melody.

And all the world is mine to wear
The sea, and the song, and the fire—
For, oh, but my Love, my Love is fair
On the mountains of Morn's Desire!

Still, it is when you come to "Dark Rosaleen" you hear the poet's true voice. As in these extracts:—

But I will go afar in the green world, up and down,
Hunting songs with a fiddle and a bow;
And you will watch me coming when the dusk grows brown
By the turn of the road we know.

There in our garden at the ending of the day,
When the wind comes lisp'ing from the south,
I will show the spoil I won and take for my pay
Seven fine kisses on the mouth.

And all night long will the little waters sing,
One song that they never can forget,
Of the sun that is waiting a new day to bring
That is always the best day yet.

And this:—

Proudly, proudly will the tall men go,
Working a clean plough and a new spade,
By the way they carry their heads shall all men know
There is a light in their hearts that will not fade.
But they will build well with good stone,
And they will dig well in free land;
And the fair thing and the rare thing that is theirs alone
Will be singing till the world can understand.

“Dark Rosaleen” is a mystic name for the spirit of Ireland, and the poet has put all his message, all his own life and suffering into these lyrics. It is not only hope for Ireland and Australia he sees, but hope for all mankind. This is his feeling. This his passionate belief:—

Hope goes like wine to the head
That God will have His way.

All his work is full of thought and he has opened many ways and doors to younger writers. One of these—a striking woman writer, Nera McAuliffe, was “discovered” by him. She had written promising work from New Zealand, both under her own name and the *nom-de-plume* of John Egan, before Wright took the rough diamond and polished it. None of this writer’s work has been collected yet: but, when it is, it must take its place with the best verse so far produced in Australia. She has a song and knows how to sing it.

Another woman-writer owes something, I think, to the influence of Wright—Clarice Crosbie—whose work appears under the *nom-de-plume* of Syd. C. She is the surest craftswomen of all the writing sisterhood. Her note is fine and cool. She is the only woman I know who can write real topical verse. I may be wrong in imagining that this excellent verse woman has learned something from Wright: but he is the finest craftsman of them all, and a young writer could have no better teacher.

As a writer of light verse, he even surpasses Frank Morton, that New Zealand verse-maker, who came to Australia some years ago, and has maintained ever since an astonishingly fine average in both verse and prose. Sometimes he writes poetry. Seldom does he write without distinction, and never dully. As a topical writer, he is often amusing, though he never gets Ernest O’Farrell’s (Kodak’s) whimsical cutlock. There is an elfin mirth in Kodak no other writer has.

I have not given you in these extracts either from Wright or any of our poets their true value, because I want you yourselves to go to their work and form your own opinion.

Believe me that it is worth your while, for, as I have before told you, a nation must stand by the work of its people, and if you want to know just how much a nation counts, just how much

its place is worth in the sun, look at what its pens have been doing. I can assure you that in your country a great song is being made for you, and many able pens have fought in your midst for Australia, her principles, her ideals, and her honour, so that she has become a thing of which to be proud. My friends, such pens are writing now, for among Australian writers, all I have met, all I have known, I have found a great belief in Australia. That is what matters to the nation. In my school days, English was not regarded as an important subject. I am not concerned about its place in the curriculum to-day; but I am concerned, as I trust you yourselves are, with the place of Australian thought. A systematic study of our own literature would reveal an astonishing knowledge of world letters on the part of our writers.

C. J. Brennan might very well open the field of French literature to us, J. le Gay Brereton, Elizabethan, and D. McK. Wright has the magic keys to the most fascinating field of all—the Irish.

A knowledge of our own literature, a feeling for our own songs, I believe to be of more importance than anything else in the curriculum. This knowledge will widen the child's vision, broaden his spirit; and when the real feeling for Lawson, Edmond, Wright, Quinn, Daley, McCrae, Brennan, and the others awakens in his heart the power of his own expression will develop. What, after all, whether our ultimate goal be a profession, a craft, or a commercial life, is the real thing at which all teaching is aiming? What is that for which we all are striving from the moment we stretch out our helpless infant hands? It is expression. We Australians speak badly. We have classes in our schools for French conversation, but none for English conversation. You know yourselves that children who will write an excellent paper on Milton or Shakespeare, talk in interjections and the broken sentences of the uncivilised. So I tell you to begin your literature at home.

This book, "An Irish Heart," is only one of many filled with fine thought and music. But to you, as teachers, I cannot recommend a book which has more poems than this in it for your use.

There is the "Viking Song" which, set to music by Coleridge-Taylor, was used as the British munition worker's song during the war, several child pieces, and many ballads and lyrics, all suitable for any age. It is impossible, as I have spent so much time on the more important verse this man has written, to go into a close study of his prose. He has written so much that the task of sorting it all out would be colossal. As sincerity and simplicity are the outstanding features of his verse, so are honesty and lucidity the keynotes of his prose. An instance of this is to be found in a recent article he wrote on Keats. This is 1921. So it is just a hundred years since John Keats died. A Memorial Volume, written in honour of him as well as to raise funds for the purchase of his house, having been published, Wright reviewed the book.

It consisted of verses and appreciative articles written on the dead genius. Most of the writers seemed to pity Keats' early death, and the predominating note of the book was the cry that we hear from critics all over the world: "What a shame Keats died so young."

Wright concluded his characteristic article with: "What a pity he died so young? Thank God he lived so long!" That, to my mind, is the most honest remark that I have ever read on Keats—a poet who is in danger of extinction by a world-wide worship to-day.

In all his prose writings, as yet uncollected, Wright displays a sincere power of light and shade in words, thoughts, phrases. His method is simple and direct. The adjectives in his sentences do not terrify the verb with their numbers. The flowers of his expressive thought bear their fruits in the same clause; and nearly everything he has written of late years is poetical in expression. It may be said of him that he has set stocks and shares to music, and rhymed potatoes into market in his topical verses.

His Irish playlets, which form a field of expression in themselves, are prose-poems, often exquisitely handled. Amongst the best are "The Harp that Once," "The Formorians," and "Dunlang O'Hartagan." These have not yet been collected.

There are stories, dozens of them, which have come from his facile pen, but I think that it is as a poet we must chiefly consider him.

Like Lawson's, only I think in a fuller measure, Wright's song has gathered more strength, more courage, more power with his years. To-day his voice is clearer and truer than ever. A sonnet recently published in *The London Mercury* bears out my statement, as well as the many fine sonnets and poems which have recently been published in *The Bulletin*. Mentioning the sonnet reminds me that a little while ago the poet wrote an amazing "Crown of Sonnets"—a feat which has never before been attempted successfully in English. The "Crown" is of Italian origin, consisting of fifteen sonnets, each sonnet beginning with the last line of the preceding sonnet; the last sonnet—the Master Sonnet—being composed of the first line of the fourteen sonnets before it. Anyone weak in mathematics had better not attempt it. The wonder to me is how such a fine poem as Wright's "Crown of Sonnets" is could have been written to a pattern.

I have talked to you a long time on this poet and his work—some of his work—but I assure you the quantity of good work he has given us is simply colossal. When it all comes to be collected, the bulk will far exceed that of any other Australian verse-maker. But it is the quality of his poetry and its high average of excellence which give Wright the place he undeniably holds in Australian letters to-day.

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- Aorangi, and Other Verses* (Dunedin 1896).
- Station Ballads and Other Verses* (Dunedin, 1897).
- An Irish Heart* (Sydney, 1918).
- Other Uncollected MSS. from "The Bulletin."*
- Satyræ and Sunlight*, Hugh McCrae (Melbourne, 1911).

GELLERT.

How war has tired his youth and left his eyes
Stained with the blood of battle that no flowers
Sweeten to-day—neither the love-twined bowers
Blowing a lullaby in paradise,
Nor poppies flaunting peace beneath our skies.
His heart but feels burnt smokes of other hours.
Lost in Gallipoli: and his mind showers
Pictures as poignant as a sick man's cries

But when the soldier shrouds a banner make
For the great Dawn of truer peace, maybe
His voice, first made articulate through pain,
Shall lift a music sweeter for the sake
Of common comrades, in Man's cause to free
Man from the fury of the battle-strain.

BEDFORD.

Turn up the lights upon Australia's stage
Amber and rose and purple and the white
Full perfumed splendour on the morning's height
Of that brave sun that is our heritage!
Now for an overture! From winter's cage
Release that orchestra of winged delight
Spring's thousand birds that sing in lover-flight
To call youth back from his untimely age.

Set forests mountains, coloured rain and wind.
Blue jacaranda pyramids, gold seas
All pulsing, throbbing! Curtain's up! Here stands
A good Australian whose strong, eager mind
Waits not for dreams nor stays for memories
But seeks the moments good with both his hands.

PATERSON.

Hoof-beats of horses on bright turf to-day;
Rustle of whips on the bay flanks and black!
On—on and on: and the white, shining track
Thrills with the racing clamour. Clear the way
For Clancy and his cattle and the grey
Dust-spread of distances. Now turn them back,
And let us hear to a great stockwhip's crack
The Man from Snowy River sing his lay.

Where is more laughter than in songs he found
About the camp-fires of the farthest west?
He found the strong and happy lives that grow
Untrained, unpruned from our Australian ground
And made them peers of the adventurous best
In lilting mirth of a well-tuned banjo.

LAWSON

Voice of the mighty bush, Australia's mate!

Now shall our ears be filled with human tales

And our eyes stung with tears as Lawson hails

In a man's way his friends at Memory's gate.

Here are a hundred comrades, grim as Fate,

Brown as the soil they till, the crop that fails.

Grasp their firm hands: for through each true heart wails
A poet's pity passionately great.

O, brothers of the bush, for you he sang,

The men and women of the lonely way.

This sailor-gipsy with the bushman's grip

Has set in all our tears the salt that sprang

Out of the sea God's tears made misty grey

Beyond the lights of human comradeship.

HENRY LAWSON.

I never can think of Henry Lawson without going far back to my old bush home and once more slipping into the circle of bush-mates around a now dead camp-fire. I can see the brown, bearded men, frying pans washed, dampers cooking in the ashes, and pipes alight, all gathered about, singing and talking—singing generally:—

Wrap me up in my stockwhip and blankets

And bury me deep down below

Where the dingoes and crows won't molest me,

In the shade where the coolabahs grow.

Then I can hear a voice cry, "Give us a bit of Harry, Andy"; and Andy clears his voice and begins:—

Jack Denver died on Talbragar when Christmas Eve began.

And there was sorrow round the place, for Denver was a man;

Jack Denver's wife bowed down her head—her daughter's grief was wild.

But big Ben Duggan saddled up, and galloped fast and far,

And big Ben Duggan by the bed stood sobbing like a child.

To raise the longest funeral ever seen at Talbragar.

By station home

And shearing shed

Ben Duggan cried, "Jack Denver's dead!

Roll up at Talbragar!"

Andy was an eloquent elocutionist, and, when he really worked himself up to "big Ben Duggan's" ride, his excitement spread to the others, who would take their pipes from their mouths, and clash in on each following chorus with a ringing:—

"Roll up at Talbragar!"

When it came to the last verse, for Duggan, you remember, was killed on that gallant ride, Andy would take off his felt hat, and, drooping his head, conclude mournfully:—

But one short hour before he died he woke to understand.
 They told him, when he asked them, that the funeral was "grand" ;
 And then there came into his eyes a strange victorious light.
 He smiled on them in triumph, and his great soul took its flight.
 And still the careless bushmen tell by tent and shanty bar
 How Duggan raised a funeral years back on Talbragar.
 And far and wide
 When Duggan died
 The bushmen of the western side
 Rode into Talbragar.

Other verses would follow. Then sooner or later someone was bound to be called upon for "The Man from Ironbark," and A. B. Paterson would be amongst us. I still treasure one of the old brown books of "The Man from Snowy River," which travelled in Andy's tucker-box many thousands of long brown miles. Edward Dyson came to that camp-fire in spirit, too, also Edward J. Brady ; but before R. J. Cassidy and Will Lawson had joined the bush singers, I had left the camp-fire behind me. With the mention of these singers, I have come to perhaps the most important influence in our literature—the influence of the bush ; and at the head of these bush-men, still as keen a favourite as he was in the days of my childhood, stands Henry Lawson. He has interpreted the bush for us as no one has done before him, as no one is ever likely to do again.

Lawson is the mate of Australia. She has opened out her hard, dry heart, and her withered, wearied soul to him—Australia of the Drought. She has given him her good brown hand, and her healthy, happy smile—Australia of the Good Seasons. Her winds have sung to him. Her seas have called him. Her dust has clung, singing, to his lips ; he has carried her swag of courage over the sands of Death or by her gushing rills of Life.

In prose and in verse, he has called us in thousands to witness the bravery of her women, the brown kindness of her men, their grit, their pluck, their doggedness. From every corner of our land, sometimes to the ring of a stockwhip, sometimes to the sound of a hobble, and yet again to the casual "Come on !" of a mate's voice, he has brought in a variety of characters, and with the touch of a brother's hand, shown us the very core of their being—the bush mother's anguish, the children's grief, the father's stalwartness. His method of telling a story, either in verse or prose, is a direct one. He gets his finest effects in prose by close observation and details so minute as to be almost all intimate. He never attempts a plot. His characters get into no difficult situations. His effect depends upon no mechanical plan. His people are all honest, simple. He challenges O. Henry, the great American short story writer in his own field, and, I think, has shown us the good in humanity even more faithfully than O. Henry.

Even Kipling does not outrival Lawson in his power to draw the best from the worst. "Macquarie's Mate," a sketch which you will find in "While the Billy Boils," is one of the very best

examples of this kind I can recall. But every character you meet in Lawson's work is drawn so faithfully that when you are introduced you feel the character is your mate, as it was Lawson's before you. People! He has put character into our very cows. I seem to have met this particular cow in "A Day on a Selection." Lawson writes:—"The selector himself is standing against a fence talking to a neighbour. His arms rest on the top rail of the fence, his chin rests on his hands, his pipe rests between his fingers, and his eyes rest on a white cow that is chewing her cud on the opposite side of the fence. The neighbour's arms rest on the top rail also, his chin rests on his hands, his pipe rests between his fingers, and his eyes rest on the cow. They are talking about that cow. They have been talking about her for three hours. She is chewing her cud. Her nose is well up and forward, and her eyes are shut. She lets her lower jaw fall a little, moves it to one side, lifts it again, and brings it back into position with a springing kind of jerk that has almost a visible recoil. Then her jaws stay perfectly still for a moment, and you would think she has stopped chewing. But she hasn't. Now and again a soft, easy, smooth-going swallow passes visibly along her clean, white throat, and disappears. She is young and in good condition; she has had enough to eat, the sun is just properly warm for her, and—well, if an animal can be really happy, she ought to be."

Now, who is this man who can so minutely describe an Australian scene? He was born in 1867, in a tent on the Grenfell diggings. Two years before, at Ballarat, Edward Dyson, who, next to Lawson, writes the most characteristically Australian verse and prose, first saw the happy light of his birth-land. So that as children they were playing about the respective shafts and gullies of which they write.

Lawson's mother, who had been Louisa Albury, an Australian girl, was the only woman on the Grenfell goldfield when Lawson was born, and, writing of his birth thirty-six years later, he recalls it thus:—

Then they heard the tent-poles clatter,
 And the fly in twain was torn—
 'Twas the soiled rag of a tatter
 Of the tent where I was born.
 Does it matter? Which is stranger—
 Brick or stone or calico?
 There was One born in a manger
 Nineteen hundred years ago

His father was Peter Hertzberg Larsen, a Norwegian, the son of a teacher of navigation and a good seamen, who went to the diggings with the early rushes. His mother came of well-educated English parents, though there has always been a tradition in the family that, as her people came from Kent, she had gipsy blood in her veins. A member of the Lawson family writing to *The Bulletin* recently discounts the gipsy traditions; but adds that Louisa Lawson told many tales, gathered from the lips of her

people, all of which were similar to the gipsy tales told round the camp-fires of the picturesque nomads. Louisa Lawson encouraged her son to write as soon as he showed that his inclination was towards letters.

According to his brother Charles, Lawson's first poem was on "William the Conqueror," and, at the age of eleven, the young poet had decided that:—

William, called the Conqueror,
Was a brave and gallant knight,
But he was a cruel and evil King
And his principle was fight.

I quote Charles Lawson's words from *The Bulletin* Red Page. This is how the effort was received in the family:—

Father was interested, but mother, fresh from the success of her maiden poem, "My Nettie," did not enthuse. She bade Henry try some more likely subject, assuring him of success. Then she threw "William the Conqueror" into the fire, and supplied the poet with paper.

His second venture was a song to his brother Charles, and began and ended nearer home.

I imagine that from that day Henry endeavoured to write, and, as his mother had a soul-deep love for Kendall's verse, young Lawson often must have heard them from her lips. Lawson was an infant of two when Kendall, in 1869, published "Leaves from Australian Forests." But he was an imaginative boy of 13 when "Songs from the Mountains" appeared, and doubtless reading Kendall with avidity.

Lawson's early years were spent on old mining fields and on his father's selection. Nearly all his best work, both in prose and in verse, is that which is written about old times, and old scenes. In his boyhood days, I think, he must have lived perpetually with the dreams he has sung and told for us—those dreams we get in "The Roaring Days," and "The Lights of Cobb and Co.," published in 1889 and 1897. There is in each of these poems the very breath of a life that has utterly vanished. The first beginning:—

The night too quickly passes
And we are growing old
So let us fill our glasses
And toast the Days of Gold;
When finds of wondrous treasure
Set all the South ablaze,
And you and I were faithful mates
All through the Roaring Days.

And concluding:—

Those golden days are vanished,
And altered is the scene;
The diggings are deserted,
The camping-grounds are green;
The flaming flag of progress
Is in the West unfurled.
The mighty Bush with iron rails
Is tethered to the world.

"The Lights of Cobb and Co." ends on an even finer old-time note:—

Swift scramble up the sidling where teams climb inch by inch
Pause, bird-like, on the summit—then breakneck down the pinch
By clear, ridge-country rivers, and gaps where tracks run high,
Where waits the lonely horseman cut clear against the sky;
Past haunted half-way houses—where convicts made the bricks—
Scrub-yards and new bark shanties, we dash with five and six;
Through stringy bark and blue-gum, and box and pine we go—
A hundred miles shall see to-night the lights of Cobb and Co.!

At about seventeen Lawson came to Sydney, attended a night school, and took up the occupation of a coach-painter. It was a troublous time of strikes, and Lawson was caught in the spell of socialism. His first verses began to appear about 1887 and they at once attracted attention. What wonder, when in 1888, at the age of 21, Lawson wrote "Faces in the Street," which is as telling in its force to-day as it was thirty-three years ago?—

They lie, the men who tell us, for reasons of their own,
That want is here a stranger, and that misery's unknown;
For where the nearest suburb and the city proper meet
My window-sill is level with the faces in the street—
Drifting past, drifting past
To the beat of weary feet—
While I sorrow for the owners of those faces in the street.

And cause I have to sorrow, in a land so young and fair,
To see upon those faces stamped the marks of Want and Care:
I look in vain for traces of the fresh and fair and sweet
In sallow, sunken faces that are drifting through the street—
Drifting on, drifting on,
To the scrape of restless feet:
I can sorrow for the owners of the faces in the street.

In seven years that note of sympathy, beginning in a minor key had changed to a major. It became in "The Star of Australasia":—

We boast no more of our bloodless flag that rose from a nation's slime;
Better a shred of a deep-dyed rag from the storms of the olden time.
From grander clouds in our "peaceful skies" than ever were there before
I tell you the Star of the South shall rise—in the lurid clouds of war.
It ever must be while blood is warm and the sons of men increase;
For ever the nations rose in storm, to rot in a deadly peace.
There'll come a point that we will not yield, no matter if right or wrong;
And man will fight on the battlefield while passion and pride are strong—
So long as he will not kiss the rod, and his stubborn spirit sours.
For the scorn of Nature and curse of God are heavy in peace like ours.

All creeds and trades will have soldiers there—give every class its due—
And there'll be many a clerk to spare for the pride of the jackeroo.
They'll fight for honour and fight for love, and a few will fight for gold.
For the devil below and for God above, as our fathers fought of old;
And some half-blind with exultant tears, and some stiff-lipped stern-eyed,
For the pride of a thousand after-years and the old eternal pride;
The soul of the world they will feel and see in the chase and the grim
retreat—
They'll know the glory of victory—and the grandeur of defeat.

Lawson wrote that in 1895 more than 20 years before our troops landed at Gallipoli. With those troops, in the 10th Battalion, on the morning of the 25th April, 1915, Leon Gellert landed. When Lawson wrote his stirring lines, Gellert was a little boy of three in Adelaide, and Trooper Gerardy, our other soldier-singer, was four. That Gellert had felt both "the glory of victory—and the grandeur of defeat" was evident all through his notable book of war-poems, "Songs of a Campaign."

In that volume there is nothing like Chesterton's "Ballad of St. Barbara"; but no other young man, who fought on either field, produced finer verses inspired by the war than Gellert.

I have read you from "The Star of Australasia," Lawson's stirring call to arms. This is Gellert's terrible reply 20 years later, in "The Last to Leave":—

I sat there long, and listened—all things listened, too.

I heard the epic of a thousand trees:

A thousand waves I heard, and then I knew

The waves were very old, the trees were wise:

The dead would be remembered evermore—

The valiant dead that gazed upon the skies.

And slept in great battalions by the shore.

My mentioning this has lead me from the subject of Lawson's life. However, you will find that for yourselves in the preface to Lawson's "Selected Poems," published in 1918. There Wright has simply and sincerely put Lawson before us from the moment he began to write in earnest. Wright says:—

He was the voice of a new movement; the ringing, surging rebellion of his song echoed the unrest of the eighties and ninties, years full of great labour strikes and the breaking up of old political parties. Then he wandered far into the interior of Australia—his fame growing all the while—saw and shared the rude strenuous life of his brothers in a dozen varieties of toil, crossed over to New Zealand, and added to the tang of the gum-leaves something of the salt of the great Southern Ocean. He has lived the life that he sings and seen the places of which he writes; there is not a word in all his work which is not instantly recognised by its readers as honest Australian. The drover, the stock-man, the shearer, the rider far on the sky-line, the girl waiting at the sliprails, the big bush funeral, the coach with flashing lamps passing at night along the ranges, the man to whom home is a bitter memory and his future a long despair, the troops marching to the beat of the drum, the coasting vessel struggling through blinding south westerly gales, the great grey plain, the wilderness of the Never-never—in long procession the pictures pass, and every picture is a true one because Henry Lawson has been there to see with the eyes of his heart.

I like that expression, seeing with the "eyes of his heart." It is exactly what Lawson does: and, as his heart is in sympathy with all men, especially the broken and lost, I need not tell you that that which his eyes see is always the best under the worst everywhere.

His predominant note is tragic. Even his laughter is grim at times, but he can arouse our sympathy for everything he touches.

In this selected volume of his verses you will find practically the best. If you are meeting Lawson for the first time, go to it for his poetry. Go to "While the Billy Boils" for an introduction to his prose. There can be no excuse for a good Australian not knowing Lawson, for nearly all his work has been published, and every book should find a place on your book-shelf.

Henry Lawson has never written a novel. I think if you read a little of his prose you will know why. He can draw characters, he knows his colour well, he has plenty of descriptive power; but he never really contrives to make a plot. To sustain the interest in a long story it is necessary that the movement should develop around the working out of some life problem. It may be only the unravelling of a mystery or the account of a dangerous adventure from which the people concerned escape with success or honour; or it may be the larger working of a man or woman's soul brought from darkness to light. The commonest of all plots is that of the love of two young people, separated by wealth, or rank, or some condition or convention, who are at last united and triumphant over all obstacles. The main thing is that to sustain the reader's interest over three or four hundred pages there must be a plot of some sort; and Henry Lawson is not a plot-maker. Indeed, very few Australian fiction-writers are plot-makers. In this matter the work of two new Australian writers, Margaret Fane and Hilary Lofting, is beginning to stand out.

Lawson's tales are generally sketches of a group of people under a special set of conditions, and owe their power and charm to his intimate and understanding sympathy rather than to events recorded. Where something like a plot does exist in his tales, it is of a rudimentary sort, far too slender to carry more than a single incident.

Though his prose is the more bulky part of his work, I think it of less importance than his verse; but that may be because of the early influence of those old mates of my childhood, who knew his verse so well.

It is impossible, even by adequate extracts, to give you any idea of the excellence of Lawson's prose. But perhaps I can enable you to see his method if I read you some of the passages which have always appealed to me.

"While the Billy Boils," his first book of prose to be collected, was published in 1896. He had been writing continuously from 1887, and, though he was generally engaged in some other occupation as well, by 1896 he was already widely known and read in every corner of Australia. His work was appearing in *The Bulletin*, *The Worker* (Sydney), and many other Sydney and New Zealand papers.

In his first book there are many well-known tales and sketches, including his most famous, "His Father's Mate." The opening of the tale is characteristically Lawson-like. It is, moreover, the simple and straightforward method of the born tale-teller.

It was Golden Gully still, but golden in name only, unless indeed the yellow mullock heaps or the bloom of the wattle trees on the hill-side gave it a claim to the title. But the gold was gone from the gully, and the diggers were gone, too, after the manner of Timon's friends when his wealth deserted him. Golden Gully was a dreary place, dreary even for an abandoned goldfield. The poor, tortured earth, with its wounds all bare, seemed to make a mute appeal to the surrounding bush to come up and hide it, and, as if in answer to its appeal, the shrub and saplings were beginning to close in from the foot of the range. The wilderness was reclaiming its own again.

There is an entire absence of all embroidery of phrase and metaphor. His prose reflects in its very method the soul of the men and women about whom he writes.

I am not going to read you the whole of this particular tale. It is much too long for one reason, and much too tragic for another. Lawson is at home with the tragic side of life, and often is inclined to accumulate too much tragedy into the life of one person: but, as many of his tales are taken actually from the real experiences of real characters, of this we cannot complain.

The tragedy in one tale is, in a measure, balanced by the comedy in another, though Lawson's humour is never hilarious. The loud laughter does not drown out the tears.

As an example of how he can get humour from the most casual incidents, take this from "Across the Straits":—

Did you ever lose a sovereign or a half-sovereign under similar circumstances? You think of it casually and feel for it carelessly at first, to be sure that it's there all right: then, after going through your pockets three or four times with rapidly growing uneasiness, you lose your head a little and dredge for that coin hurriedly and with painful anxiety. Then you force yourself to be calm, and proceed to search yourself systematically, in a methodical manner. At this stage, if you have time, it's a good plan to sit down and think out when and where you last had that half-sovereign, and where you have been since, and which way you came from there, and what you took out of your pocket, and where, and whether you might have given it in mistake for sixpence at that pub where you rushed in to have a beer, and then you calculate the chances against getting it back again. The last of these reflections is apt to be painful, and the painfulness is complicated and increased when there happen to have been several pubs and a like number of hurried farewell beers in the recent past.

And for months after that you cannot get rid of the idea that that half-sov. might be about your clothes somewhere. It haunts you. You turn your pockets out, and feel the lining of your coat and vest inch by inch, and examine your letters, papers—everything you happen to have had in your pockets that day—over and over again, and by-and-bye you peer into envelopes and unfold papers that you didn't have in your pocket at all, but might have had. And when the novelty of the first search has worn off, and the fit takes you, you make another. Even after many months have passed away, some day—or night—when you are hard up for tobacco and a drink, you suddenly think of that late lamented half-sov., and are moved by adverse circumstances to look through your old clothes in a sort of forlorn hope, or to give good luck a sort of chance to surprise you—the only chance that you can give it.

Passage after passage springs into my mind to read to you: but this must suffice, though I have given you no example of his

paches. One might easily spend an hour merely reading Lawson aloud to you: his work is so full of life, truth, and people, who matter because of their sincerity.

Suppose I give you the names of a few tales and sketches I like. I should begin by telling you that I like them all, especially the tales in "Joe Wilson and His Mates;" but some favourites are, in "While the Billy Boils;" "His Father's Mate," "An Old Mate of Your Father's," "A Day on a Selection," "An Echo from the Old Bark School," "The Shearing of the Cook's Dog," "Across the Straits," "The Drover's Wife," and "Macquarie's Mate." I am not sure that the last is not Lawson's very best sketch. In "Children of the Bush," I like "Send Round the Hat," "The Romance of the Swag" and "Buckolt's Gate," as well as "The Ghosts of Many Christmases," to mention a few; and in "On the Track and Over the Sliprails," "The Songs They Used to Sing," "Two Larrikins," "The Darling River," and "The Master's Mistake." If you ever think of taking a trip along the Darling, first consult Lawson.

Returning to his verse, which we left at "The Star of Australasia" in 1895, it must be confessed that Lawson has a habit of using the same material in his rhyme that he uses in his prose. Thus the same characters appear in both.

Since the best of Lawson's verse is so admirably selected and printed for us in "Selected Poems of Henry Lawson," we can look at it now. As teachers, I think you would find it better to have all Lawson's work in your libraries; but for school purposes this selected volume is excellent. It is also a useful book to have if you are giving a lesson on Lawson's verse, as it enables you to trace his development from "Faces in the Street" to "Scots of the Riverina." You will also find the tenderest of the poet's ballads here, "The Sliprails and the Spur" opening on the beautiful stanza:—

The colours of the setting sun
Withdrew across the western land—
He raised the sliprails, one by one,
And shot them home with trembling hand;
Her brown hands clung—her face grew pale—
Ah! quivering chin and eyes that brim!—
One quick, fierce kiss across the rail.
And. "Good-bye, Mary!" "Good-bye, Jim!"

Lawson's pictures are black and white drawings rather than coloured landscapes. The greys, browns and whites of the bush appeal to him rather than the reds and yellows and blues, though this can scarcely be said of "The Blue Mountains."

The height of tragedy is met in "Past Carin'," one of his numerous verses which depicts out-back life. "Black Bonnet" is the best of his poems dealing exclusively with one character.

"Ports of the Open Sea" shows the influence of the sea on the poet. But every poem in these pages reflects some mood of Lawson's, and, if you do not know him, come to this book.

In many ways his work is utterly unlike any of the other bush singers I mentioned in the commencement of this lecture. Of the three, Dyson, Brady, and Paterson, Paterson is nearest to him in thought and feeling. But, though his best work deals with the sea, Brady's bush pictures can be very true, and Dyson knows the mining colour well. I have put these four men together because their work belongs to the men of the bush, the mine, the wharf and the turf more exclusively than it does to anyone else, and its literary value lies in that. You can hear the bushmen, the miners, the seamen and the station-hands talk in their work, and in the years to come this will be of value to the philologist. Their work is almost all in dialect, though some of Brady's best verse in "The House of the Four Winds" keeps away from colloquialism. Other writers there are—such as C. J. Dennis, who use a dialect, but I have chosen these men as being the more important for your study.

We need not bother much about Paterson's prose, as it is by no means as good as his verse. A few sentences from "The Merino Sheep" in "Three Elephant Power," a book of Paterson's tales, published in 1917, will show you his prose at its best:—

For pure, sodden stupidity there is no animal like the merino. A lamb will follow a bullock-dray, drawn by sixteen bullocks and driven by a profane person with a whip, under the impression that the aggregate monstrosity is his mother. A ewe never knows her own lamb by sight, and apparently has no sense of colour. She can recognise its voice half a mile off among a thousand other voices apparently exactly similar; but when she gets within five yards of it she starts to smell all the other lambs within reach, including the black ones—though her own may be white.

It is when we turn to his verse we find the real Paterson. Years ago this is what Victor Daley, a contemporary, thought of the bush bard. Writing to the Red Page of *The Bulletin* in 1902, the year in which Paterson's second edition of "The Man from Snowy River," and the first edition of "Rio Grande's Last Race" were published, he says:—

Lawson tells me that he likes best to write in an atmosphere of quiet. Same with Roderic Quinn. Paterson writes catch-as-catch-can. But he has the catch—a sort of cavalier swagger and swing and suggestion of the hard-riding hero who killed three horses under him, and ate the third, being short of provisions, and slew several men upon the road, and then drew up at an inn, gave his horse some whisky in his corn, wiped the blood from his sword, kissed the maid of the inn, ordered a flagon of canary, drank it, and then sat down to write a rollicking lyric.

Doubtless he was thinking of things like this, which occurs in "The Man from Snowy River":—

Then fast the horsemen galloped, where the gorges deep and black.

Resounded to the thunder of their tread,

And the stockwhips woke the echoes, and they fiercely answered back

From cliffs and crags that beetled overhead.

And upward, ever upward, the wild horses held their sway.

Where mountain-ash and kurrajong grew wide;

And the old man muttered fiercely, "We may bid the mob good day,

"No man can hold them down the other side."

It is the swift-moving, heart-beating, quickened-pulse rush of Paterson that makes his appeal strongest. He is seldom reminiscent. His rhyme moves with the time, the hour, the occasion; but there is, to my mind, a great freshness in the best of Paterson.

For a clearer description of Australia, there is nothing better than this:—

The roving breezes come and go, the reed beds sweep and sway,
The sleepy river murmurs low, and loiters on its way,
It is the land of lots o' time along the Castlereagh.

And he can feel the bush as a lover:—

The wind is in the barley-grass,
The wattles are in bloom;
The breezes greet us as they pass
With honey-sweet perfume;
The parrakeets go screaming by
With flash of golden wing,
And from the swamp the wild-ducks cry
Their long-drawn note of revelry
Rejoicing at the Spring.

I am not in love with horse-poetry; but, I still hold an affection for "Old Pardon, the Son of Reprieve." This verse seems to make up for the Australian race-audience's lack of feeling for real sport:—

And if they have racing hereafter,
(And who is to say they will not?)
When the cheers and the shouting and laughter
Proclaim that the battle grows hot;
As they come down the racecourse a-steering,
He'll rush to the front, I believe;
And you'll hear the great multitude cheering
For Pardon, the son of Reprieve.

Paterson had an inspiration in "Rio Grande's Last Race", but missed it. His humour is ever so much broader than Lawson's. You can make any audience laugh with "The Geebung Polo Club."

You will find that a great many children meet Paterson before Lawson. All these writers, of whom I am this moment speaking, children will find for themselves; but do not, as teachers, let them confuse the real work with the popular rhyme. There is a little poetry in Paterson and a great deal in Lawson; but they will find the mere verse first.

Of Dyson's and Brady's work, it is now impossible for me to talk to you at any length. Edward George Dyson might be a brother-blood bard of Lawson's and Paterson's; but, Brady, like Hugh McCrea, has a place all to himself in our literature. Dyson's "Rhymes from the Mines, and Other Lines" contains one memorable poem, "The Old Whim Horse." It is exceedingly well done, and tells of an old whim horse in a deserted mining field. One verse is:—

In that whim he worked when the night winds bellowed
 On the river summit of Giant's Hand,
 And by day when prodigal Spring had yellowed
 All the wide, long sweep of enchanted land;
 And he knew his shift, and the whistle's warning;
 And he knew the calls of the boys below;
 Through the years, unbidden, at night or morning,
 He had taken his stand by the old whim bow.

And further on:—

The floods rush high in the gully under,
 And the lightnings lash at the shrinking trees,
 Or the cattle down from the ranges blunder
 As the fires drive by on the summer breeze,
 Still the feeble horse at the right hour wanders
 To the lonely ring, though the whistle's dumb,
 And with hanging head by the bow he ponders
 Where the whim boy's gone—why the shifts don't come.

Someone once deplored the non-existence of gold stories in Australian literature to me—meaning stories of the type of the American Wild West tales—I hope the epidemic is confined to America. The gold stories, as the gold verse of Dyson, are made of truer metal—more believable, better told. For fiction, as fiction, I can find no love in my soul whatever. In the true-to-life story, the story with an ordinary plot depicting some phase of real life, and the story of human characterisation I can always find pleasure. For this reason, though there is no plot in it, though the language is often as free as laughter, I can read Dyson's "Factory 'Ands," his best-known, but not his best collection of short stories. What is the use of my telling you how good Dyson's short stories are—especially "The Golden Shanty"? You can procure for six or seven shillings any number of American shanties, but not Dyson's. A good boy's story, "The Gold Stealers" is at present running through *The Sunday Sun*, and side by side with it, Brady's boy's tale, "The River Pirates" is being republished in *The Sunday Times*. This seems to me to be a step in the right direction. Let us have our own literature in our own papers and begin at the children's end by all means.

Dyson is unlike Lawson in that I find it practically impossible to quote you a passage of his prose. There is a reality about "Benno" and "Feathers" and the rest of his characters that you will only find in the work of a man who writes in earnest. He, like Lawson, was born on a gold-field, or very close to it, and his boyhood was spent about it. He has lived his life in Australia and knows her intimately.

Unlike Dyson, who comes of English parentage, Edwin James Brady is rich in Celtic ancestry. His parents were both Irish. Brady's father, a gallant old seafaring man, who sailed into the Seven Seas many times, fought on the North side in the American slave war. Brady himself thinks that his love of sea things has come from him. The poet was born at Carcoar, N.S.W., on August

7th, 1869, and after some schooling in N.S.W., was educated for a time in Washington (D.C.), America. Returning to Australia he became a farmer, and followed numerous occupations. In 1891 he edited *The Australian Workman*, and, four years after, *The Worker* (Sydney). Then he became a free-lance journalist and, for a time, edited *The Native Companion*. "The Ways of Many Waters" appeared in 1899 and was reprinted again in 1909. Nearly all the verses have the roll of the waves, the break of surf on high cliffs, the flap of sails, and the rollicking chanties of the sea.

Perhaps "The Passing of Parker" is the most striking in its tragic pathos. But I love the sea-swing of almost every line in the book.

Take a few verses from "With Coal to Callao":—
They swung across Newcastle Bar
And sou' by east away;
They saw the Cross hung out afar
Below the Milky Way;
They saw the land go down a-lee, and heard the rollers go
Across the road, along the road, the road to Callao!

The sun came up on sixty days
And set on sixty nights;
Beneath the star-lit heaven's maze
She kept her course to rights;
And while the cool winds kissed her wings as white as driven snow
She drove the dancing spray ahead—laid down for Callao!

Or "Wool, Ho!"—a verse that makes you realise we are island people with the seas of adventure and romance washing our shores perpetually.

Not even Lawson got the heave of the waves into his blood as Brady in lines like these:—

When the clipper fleet comes over
When the scout is on the clover,
And the scarlet streaks the blue;
When the Western sheds are ringing
And the Western men are singing,
As their rolling teams come through,
Then it's ho, ho—Wool, ho!
For the busy shears are clipping, and a stir is in the shipping,
And it's yo, ho—Wool, ho!

When the boys have got together
In the warm October weather,
When a tempest of their laughter
Shakes the hut from floor to rafter,
And the bush is turning brown;
When the lover gets his maiden,
When the Southern teams are laden,
And the clip is rolling down,
Then it's ho, ho—Wool, ho!
For the trucks are at the siding and the railway chaps are chiding,
And 'tis go, go—Wool, ho!

You feel the roll of the ship more and more as the long poem continues, and hear the straining of the ropes to the end:—

When the vintage time is nearing,
When the corn ripens in the clearing,
Oh, the Wool, ho! the Wool, ho!

It will fill their pockets full, ho!
When its scent has left the clover,
When the summer days are over
And the South wind heads the rain:

With a rolling swing to larboard,
With a swinging roll to starboard,

She'll be clamping down again
For the Wool, ho!
With her goaded engines grieving thro' the pitching and the heaving,
For the Wool, ho!

When the bees have stored their honey,
When the boys have spent their money,
Ere the shears have started clipping,
Ere the stir is in the shipping,

She'll be romping down the track;
With the long green road before her,
With the bright stars beaming o'er her.

Rolling, rolling, rolling back,
For the Wool, ho! the Wool, ho!
Crowding ev'ry stitch she's got on for the wool that buys our cotton—
For the yellow, greasy Wool, ho!
The Wool, ho!
Ho, ho! The blessed holy Wool, ho!

In his last book of verse, "The House of the Winds", there is the same sea-roll, chanties and ballads, with not a little keen thought, as for instance, this:—

Four-fifths of the World are water yet; four-fifths of a Man the same;
The First Life Cleft from the Primal Sea, to mother all kingdoms came.
If I but saw with the mollusc's eyes, and thought with a human brain,
I'd read, mayhap, the Riddle of Why, and utter its meaning plain.

Randolph Bedford, born at Enmore, N.S.W., belongs to the open air and bush, too, just as surely as the more careful workman, J. H. M. Abbot, belongs to the library. I do not mean by that that Abbot does not know his bush. He does; but he is more interested in the historical setting of our life. His colour is the colour of a past Australia—the Australia of Governor Macquarie's and yet earlier times. Bedford belongs to to-day.

Bedford is novelist, playwright, poet and good Australian. He has no illusions about his own work. Writing of his life he says:—

Ran away from home at 15, and proceeded with education at Home-bush Saleyards and Glebe Island Abbatoirs, worked at Mort's Dock, and was refused a job on the *Sydney Morning Herald* because I was not a University graduate—such being then required on the *Herald* to write the price of eggs on Sussex Street. Went bush rabbiting, and got newspaper experience in Riverina—was on the Broken Hill *Argus* at 19 and Melbourne *Age* at 21. Got first yarn in *Bulletin* when 20—have lived too much to bother much about art—so naturally as a writer have been

slow, and don't believe it has arrived yet. Chased every mining rush since Broken Hill in 1886, and hope to chase a lot more. Just beginning to learn to write the things I want to do well. Chasing mining rushes most of my life was more for the romance of quick-movement and new places and a general desire to "look for see" than for the money thereof, to me the game being always greater than the stake.

Bedford's "Explorations in Civilisation" reads like a romance. I can recommend it as I can recommend you to the writings of J. H. M. Abbott. Bedford knows the sea, too, but not as Brady does with the roll of wave over wave.

As the sea has influenced Brady, so the bush has influenced nearly all Australian singers. Even the women writers have felt its breath. Especially is this so in the case of Ella McFadyen and Dorothea Mackellar.

Ella McFadyen sings with the wind as she moves along. Dorothea Mackellar views the bush from a distance; but the atmosphere, the pulse and the colour leap through the two volumes "Outland Born" by Ella McFadyen, and "The Closed Door, and Other Verses" by Dorothea Mackellar. Love of Australia, open air Australia, is keen in the blood of these women. Nina Murdoch also sings of the open air. The nature note is very vigorous among women verse-writers; but none of them quite make the sea and flowers sing as Ella McFadyen does at times.

I am not forgetting Enid Derham's delightful "Wave" nor her "Wind Folk." In her slender little book of verse, "The Mountain Road and Other Verses" the love of the bush is very deeply marked. In Elsie Cole's work you can hear the wind among the branches. None of these women take the broad sweeps their more adventurous bush brother singers have taken. But the clean scent of the sun and the wholesome fragrance of trampled, wet leaves are in all their work.

What the bush has been to Lawson the sea has been to Brady.

Here in the golden dawn of our literature, Lawson, Paterson, Dyson and Brady, sing us as we are, with all our faults, our sentiments, our passions and our better qualities—we isolated Australians, linked everlastingly by the mateship of letters to the land of our literary forefathers, Shakespeare and Milton.

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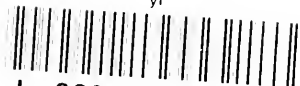
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